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PR

FALL, 1956

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The Man on the Train

ARTHUR A. COHEN
Religion as a Secular Ideology

SAUL BELLOW
On Isaac Rosenfeld

JAMES BALDWIN
Faulkner and Desegregation

FRANK BUDGEN
Further Recollections of James Joyce

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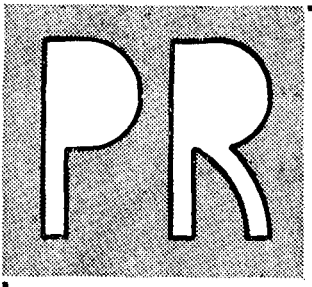

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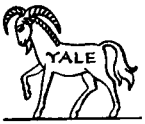

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CONTRIBUTORS

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WALKER PERCY has published in the philosophical journals and in **Commonweal.** He lives in Covington, Louisiana.

JOHN BERRYMAN'S long poem, **Homage to Mistress Bradstreet,** which first appeared in these pages, was recently published by Farrar, Straus & Cudahy.

ARTHUR A. COHEN has contributed articles on philosophy and religion to a number of periodicals.

MARIANNE MOORE'S new book of poems, **Like a Bulwark,** will be published this fall by Viking.

JEAN GROSJEAN'S poem "Out of Chaos" is from his most recent volume, **Fils de l'homme,** published in French by Librairie Gallimard, with whose permission it is here translated.

LENORE G. MARSHALL'S second volume of poems, **Other Knowledge,** will be published soon by Noonday.

ISAAC DEUTSCHER, author of **Stalin: A Political Biography,** is presently completing a biography of Trotsky.

FRANK BUDGEN, a friend of James Joyce and the author of a book on him published in the '30s, lives in London.

HILTON KRAMER is managing editor of the magazine **Arts.**

JOHN HOLLANDER teaches at Harvard.

JAMES BALDWIN'S new novel, **Giovanni's Room,** has just been published by Dial.

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Robert Lowell

91 REVERE STREET

The account of him is platitudinous, worldly and fond, but he has no Christian name and is entitled merely Major *M.* Myers in my Cousin Cassie Mason Myers Julian-James's privately printed *Biographical Sketches: A Key to a Cabinet of Heirlooms in the Smithsonian Museum.* The name-plate under his portrait used to spell out his name bravely enough: he was Mordecai Myers. The artist painted Major Myers in his sanguine War of 1812 uniform with epaulets, white breeches, and a scarlet frogged waistcoat. His right hand clenched the sword "now to be seen in the Smithsonian cabinet of heirlooms." The pose was routine and gallant. The full-lipped smile was goodhumoredly pompous and embarrassed.

Mordecai's father, given neither name nor initial, is described with an air of hurried self-congratulation by Cousin Cassie as "a friend of the Reverend Ezra Styles, afterward President of Yale College." As a very young man the son, Mordecai, studied military tactics under a French émigré, "the Bourbons' celebrated Colonel De la Croix." Later he was "matured" by six years' practical experience in a New York militia regiment organized by Colonel Martin Van Buren. After "the successful engagement against the British at Chrysler's Field, thirty shrapnel splinters were extracted from his shoulder." During convalescence, he wooed and won Miss Charlotte Bailey, "thus proving himself a better man than his rivals, the united forces of Plattsburg." He fathered ten children, sponsored an enlightened law exempting Quakers from military service in New York State, and died in 1870 at the age of ninety-four, "a Grand Old Man, who impressed strangers with the poise of his old-time manners."

* A section from an autobiography in progress, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Cudahy.

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Undoubtedly Major Mordecai had lived in a more ritualistic, gaudy, and animal world than twentieth-century Boston. There was something undecided, Mediterranean, versatile, almost double-faced about his bearing which suggested that, even to his contemporaries, he must have seemed gratuitously both *ci-devant* and *parvenu*. He was a dark man, a German Jew—no downright Yankee, but maybe such a fellow as Napoleon's mad, pomaded son-of-an-innkeeper-general, Junot, Duc D'Abrantes; a man like mad George III's pomaded, disreputable son, "Prinny," the Prince Regent. Or he was one of those Moorish-looking dons painted by his contemporary, Goya—some leader of Spanish guerrillas against Bonaparte's occupation, who fled to South America. Our Major's suffering almond eye rested on his luxurious dawn-colored fingers ruffling an off-white glove.

Bailey-Mason-Myers! Easy-going, Empire State patricians, these relatives of my Grandmother Lowell seemed to have given my father his character. For he likewise lacked that granite *back-countriness* which Grandfather Arthur Winslow attributed to his own ancestors, the iconoclastic, mulish Dunbarton New Hampshire Starks. On the joint Mason-Myers bookplate, there are two merry and naked mermaids—lovely marshmallowy, boneless, Rubensesque butterballs, all burlesque-show bosoms and Flemish smiles. Their motto, *malo frangere quam flectere,* reads "I prefer to bend than to break."

Mordecai Myers was my Grandmother Lowell's grandfather. His life was tame and honorable. He was a leisured squire and merchant, a member of the state legislature, a mayor of Schenectady, a "president" of Kinderhook village. Disappointingly, his famous "blazing brown eye" seems in all things to have shunned the outrageous. After his death he was remembered soberly as a New York State gentleman, the friend and host of worldly men and politicians with Dutch names: De Witt Clinton, Vanderpoel, Hoes, and Schuyler. My mother was roused to warmth by the Major's scarlet vest and exotic eye. She always insisted that he was the one properly dressed and dieted ancestor in the lot we had inherited from my father's Cousin Cassie. Great-great-Grandfather Mordecai! Poor sheepdog in wolf's clothing! In the anarchy of my adolescent war on my parents, I tried to make him a true wolf, the wandering Jew! *Homo lupus homini!*

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Major Mordecai Myers' portrait has been mislaid past finding, but out of my memories I often come on it in the setting of our Revere Street house, a setting now fixed in the mind, where it survives all the distortions of fantasy, all the blank befogging of forgetfulness. There, the vast number of remembered *things* remains rocklike. Each is in its place, each has its function, its history, its drama. There, all is preserved by that motherly care that one either ignored or resented in his youth. The things and their owners come back urgent with life and meaning—because finished, they are endurable and perfect.

Cousin Cassie only became a close relation in 1922. In that year she died. After some unpleasantness between Mother and a coheiress, Helen Bailey, the estate was divided. Mother used to return frozen and thrilled from her property disputes, and I, knowing nothing of the rights and wrongs, would half-perversely confuse Helen Bailey with Helen of Troy and harden my mind against the monotonous *parti pris* of Mother's voice. Shortly after our move to Boston in 1924, a score of unwanted Myers portraits was delivered to our new house on Revere Street. These were later followed by "their dowry"—four moving vans groaning with heavy Edwardian furniture. My father began to receive his first quarterly payments from the Mason-Myers Julian-James Trust Fund, sums "not grand enough to corrupt us," Mother explained, "but sufficient to prevent Daddy from being entirely at the mercy of his salary." The Trust sufficed: our lives became tantalized with possibilities, and my father felt encouraged to take the risk—a small one in those boom years—of resigning from the Navy on the gamble of doubling his income in business.

I was in the third grade and for the first time becoming a little more popular at school. I was afraid Father's leaving the Navy would destroy my standing. I was a churlish, disloyal, romantic boy, and quite without hero worship for my father, whose actuality seemed so inferior to the photographs in uniform he once mailed to us from the Golden Gate. My real *love,* as Mother used to insist to all new visitors, was toy soldiers. For a few months at the floodtide of this infatuation, people were ciphers to me—valueless except as chances for increasing my armies of soldiers. Roger Crosby, a

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child in the second grade of my Brimmer Street School, had thousands—not mass-produced American stereotypes, but hand-painted solid lead soldiers made to order in Dijon, France. Roger's father had a still more artistic and adult collection; its ranks—each man at least six inches tall—marched in glass cases under the eyes of recognizable replicas of mounted Napoleonic captains: Kleber, Marshal Ney, the King of Naples. One delirious afternoon Mr. Crosby showed me his toys and was perhaps the first grownup to talk to me not as a child but as an equal when he discovered how feverishly I followed his anecdotes on uniforms and the evolution of tactical surprise. Afterwards, full of high thoughts, I ran up to Roger's play room and hoodwinked him into believing that his own soldiers were "junk turned out by central European sweatshops." He agreed I was being sweetly generous when I traded twenty-four worthless Jordan Marsh papier-mâché doughboys for whole companies of his gorgeous, imported Old Guards, Second Empire "red-legs," and modern *chasseurs d'Alpine* with sky-blue berets. The haul was so huge that I had to take a child's wheelbarrow to Roger's house at the top of Pinckney Street. When I reached home with my last load, Mr. Crosby was talking with my father on our front steps. Roger's soldiers were all returned; I had only the presence of mind to hide a single soldier, a peely-nosed black sepoy wearing a Shriner's fez.

Nothing consoled me for my loss, but I enjoyed being allowed to draw Father's blunt dress sword, and I was proud of our Major Mordecai. I used to stand dangerously out in the middle of Revere Street in order to see through our windows and gloat on this portrait's scarlet waistcoat blazing in the bare, Spartan whiteness of our den-parlor. Mordecai Myers lost his glory when I learned from my father that he was only a "major *pro tem.*" On a civilian, even a civilian soldier, the flamboyant waistcoat was stuffy and no more martial than officers' costumes in our singing school musicals.

In the fall of 1924 we bought the 91 Revere Street house, looking out on an unbuttoned part of Beacon Hill bounded by the North End slums, though reassuringly only four blocks away from my Grandfather Winslow's brown pillared house at 18 Chestnut Street. In the decades preceding and following the First World War, old

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Yankee families had upset expectation by regaining this section of the Hill from the vanguards of the lace-curtain Irish. This was bracing news for my parents in that topsy-turvy era when the Republican Party and what were called "people of the right sort" were no longer dominant in city elections. Still, even in the palmy, laissez-faire '20s, Revere Street refused to be a straightforward, immutable residential fact. From one end to the other, houses kept being sanded down, repainted, or abandoned to the flaking of decay. Houses, changing hands, changed their language and nationality. A few doors to our south the householders spoke "Beacon Hill British" or the flat *nay nay* of the Boston Brahmin. The parents of the children a few doors north spoke mostly in Italian.

My mother felt a horrified giddiness about the adventure of our address. She once said, "We are barely perched on the outer rim of the hub of decency." We were less than fifty yards from Louisburg Square, the cynosure of old historic Boston's plain-spoken, cold roast elite—the Hub of the Hub of the Universe. Fifty yards!

As a naval ensign, Father had done postgraduate work at Harvard. He had also done postgraduate work at M.I.T., preferred the purely scientific college, and condescended to both. In 1924, however, his tone began to change; he now began to speak warmly of Harvard as his second alma mater. We went to football games at the Harvard Stadium, and one had the feeling that our lives were now being lived in the brutal, fashionable expectancy of the stadium: we had so many downs, so many minutes, and so many yards to go for a winning touchdown. It was just such a winning financial and social advance that my parents promised themselves would follow Father's resignation from the Navy and his acceptance of a sensible job offered him at the Cambridge branch of Lever Brothers' Soap.

The advance was never to come. Father resigned from the service in 1927, but he never had a civilian *career*; he instead had merely twenty-two years of the civilian *life*. Almost immediately he bought a larger and more stylish house; he sold his ascetic, stove-black Hudson and bought a plump brown Buick; later the Buick was exchanged for a high-toned, as-good-as-new Packard with a custom-designed royal blue and mahogany body. Without drama, his earnings more or less decreased from year to year.

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But so long as we were on Revere Street, Father tried to come to terms with it and must have often wondered whether he on the whole liked or disliked the neighborhood's lack of side. He was still at this time rather truculently democratic in what might be described as an upper middle-class, naval, and Masonic fashion. He was a mumbler. His opinions were almost morbidly hesitant, but he considered himself a matter-of-fact man of science and had an unspoiled faith in the superior efficiency of northern nations. He modeled his allegiances and humor on the cockney imperialism of Rudyard Kipling's dirty-mouthed Tommies, who did their job. Autochthonous Boston snobs, such as the Winslows or members of Mother's reading club, were alarmed by the brassy callousness of our naval visitors, who labeled the Italians they met on Revere Street as "grade-A" and "grade-B wops." The Revere Street "grade-B's" were Sicilian Catholics and peddled crummy second-hand furniture on Cambridge Street, not far from the site of Great-great-Grandfather Charles Lowell's disused West Church, praised in an old family folder as "a haven from the Sodom and Gomorrah of Trinitarian orthodoxy and the tyranny of the letter." Revere Street "grade-A's," good North Italians, sold fancy groceries and Colonial heirlooms in their shops near the Public Garden. Still other Italians were Father's familiars; they sold him bootleg Scotch and *vino rosso* in teacups.

The outside of our Revere Street house was a flat red brick surface unvaried by the slightest suggestion of purple panes, delicate bay, or triangular window-cornice—a sheer wall formed by the seamless conjunction of four inseparable façades, all of the same commercial and purgatorial design. Though placed in the heart of Old Boston, it was ageless and artless, an epitome of those "leveler" qualities Mother found most grueling about the naval service. 91 Revere Street was mass-produced, *regulation-issue,* and yet struck Boston society as stupidly out of the ordinary, like those white elephants—a mother-of-pearl scout knife or a tea-kettle barometer—which my father used to pick up on sale at an Army-Navy store.

The walls of Father's minute Revere Street den-parlor were bare and white. His bookshelves were bare and white. The den's one adornment was a ten-tube home-assembled battery radio set, whose loudspeaker had the shape and color of a Mexican sombrero,

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The radio's specialty was getting programs from Australia and New Zealand in the early hours of the morning.

My father's favorite piece of den furniture was his oak and "rhinoceros hide" armchair. It was ostentatiously a masculine, or rather a bachelor's, chair. It had a notched, adjustable back; it was black, cracked, hacked, scratched, splintered, gouged, initialed, gunpowder-charred and tumbler-ringed. It looked like pale tobacco leaves laid on dark tobacco leaves. I doubt if Father, a considerate man, was responsible for any of the marring. The chair dated from his plebe days at the Naval Academy, and had been bought from a shady, shadowy, roaring character, midshipman "Beauty" Burford. Father loved each disfigured inch.

My father had been born two months after his own father's death. At each stage of his life, he was to be forlornly fatherless. He was a deep boy brought up entirely by a mild widowed mother and an intense widowed grandmother. When he was fourteen and a half, he became a deep young midshipman. By the time he graduated from Annapolis, he had a high sense of abstract form, which he beclouded with his humor. He had reached, perhaps, his final mental possibilities. He was deep—not with profundity, but with the dumb depth of one who trusted in statistics and was dubious of personal experience. In his forties, Father's soul went underground: as a civilian he kept his high sense of form, his humor, his accuracy, but this accuracy was henceforth unimportant, recreational, *hors de combat*. His debunking grew myopic; his shyness grew evasive; he argued with a fumbling languor. In the twenty-two years Father lived after he resigned from the Navy, he never again deserted Boston and never became Bostonian. He survived to drift from job to job, to be displaced, to be grimly and literally that old cliché, a fish out of water. He gasped and wheezed with impotent optimism, took on new ideals with each new job, never ingeniously enjoyed his leisure, never even hid his head in the sand.

Mother hated the Navy, hated naval society, naval pay, and the trip-hammer rote of settling and unsettling a house every other year when Father was transferred to a new station or ship. She had been married nine or ten years and still suspected that her husband was savorless, unmasterful, merely considerate. Unmasterful—Father's

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specialized efficiency lacked utterly the flattering bossiness she so counted on from her father, my Grandfather Winslow. It was not Father's absence on sea-duty that mattered; it was the eroding necessity of moving *with* him, of keeping in step. When he was far away on the Pacific, she had her friends, her parents, a house to herself—Boston! Fully conscious of her uniqueness and normality she basked in the refreshing stimulation of dreams in which she imagined Father as suitably sublimed. She used to describe such a sublime man to me over tea and English muffins. He was Siegfried carried lifeless through the shining air by Brunnhilde to Valhalla, and accompanied by the throb of my Great Aunt Sarah playing his leitmotif in the declamatory manner taught her by the Abbé Liszt. Or Mother's hero dove through the grottoes of the Rhine and slaughtered the homicidal and vulgar dragon coiled about the golden hoard. Mother seemed almost light-headed when she retold the romance of Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon,* the Eaglet, the weakling! She would speak the word *weakling* with such amused vehemence that I formed a grandiose and false image of L'Aiglon's Father, the *big* Napoleon: he was a strong man who scratched under his paunchy little white vest a torso all hair, muscle, and manliness. Instead of the dreams, Mother now had the insipid fatigue of keeping house. Instead of the *Eagle,* she had a twentieth-century naval commander interested in steam, radio, and "the fellows." To avoid naval yards, steam, and "the fellows," Mother had impulsively bought the squalid, impractical Revere Street house. Still, marriage daily forced her to squander her subconsciously hoarded energies.

"Weelawaugh, we-ee-eeelawaugh, weelawaugh," shrilled Mother's high voice. *"But-and, but-and, but-and!"* Father's low mumble would drone in answer. Though I couldn't be sure that I had caught the meaning of the words, I followed the sounds as though they were a movie. I felt drenched in my parents' passions.

91 Revere Street was the setting for those arthritic spiritual pains that troubled us for the two years my mother spent in trying to argue my father into resigning from the Navy. When the majestic, hollow boredom of the second year's autumn dwindled to the mean boredom of a second winter, I grew less willing to open my mouth. I bored my parents, they bored me.

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"Weelawaugh, we-ee-eelawaugh, weelawaugh!" "But-and, but-and, but-and!"

During the week ends I was at home much of the time. All day I used to look forward to the nights when my bedroom walls would once again vibrate, when I would awake with rapture to the rhythm of my parents arguing, arguing one another to exhaustion. Sometimes, without bathrobe or slippers, I would wriggle out into the cold hall on my belly and ambuscade myself behind the banister. I could often hear actual words. "Yes, yes, yes," Father would mumble. He was "backsliding" and "living in the fool's paradise of habitual retarding and retarded do-nothing inertia." Mother had violently set her heart on the resignation. She was hysterical even in her calm, but like a patient and forbearing strategist, she tried to pretend her neutrality. One night she said with murderous coolness, "Bobby and I are leaving for Papá's." This was an ultimatum to force Father to sign a deed placing the Revere Street house in Mother's name.

I writhed with disappointment on the nights when Mother and Father only lowed harmoniously together like cows, as they criticized Helen Bailey or Admiral De Stahl. Once I heard my mother say, "A *man* must make up his *own* mind. Oh Bob, if you are going to resign, do it *now* so I can at least plan on your son's *survival* and education at a single school!"

About this time I was being sent for my *survival* to Dr. Dane, a Unitarian chiropractor with an office on Marlborough Street. Dr. Dane wore an old-fashioned light tan druggist's smock; he smelled like a healthy old-fashioned drugstore. His laboratory was free of intimidating technical equipment, and had only the conservative lay roughness and toughness that was so familiar and disarming to us in my Grandfather Winslow's country study or bedroom. Dr. Dane's rosy hands wrenched my shoulders with tremendous éclat and made me feel a hero; I felt unspeakable joy whenever an awry muscle fell back into serenity. My mother, who had no curiosity or imagination for cranky occultism, trusted Dr. Dane's clean, undrugged manliness—so like home. She believed that chiropractic had cured me of my undiagnosed asthma, which had defeated the expensive specialists.

"A penny for your thoughts, Schopenhauer," my mother would say.

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"I am thinking about pennies," I'd answer.

"When *I* was a child I used to love telling Mamá everything I had done," Mother would say.

"But you're not a child," I would answer.

I used to enjoy dawdling and humming "Anchors Aweigh" up Revere Street after a day at school. "Anchors Aweigh," the official Navy song, had originally been the song composed for my father's class. And yet my mind always blanked and seemed to fill with a clammy hollowness when Mother asked prying questions. Like other tongue-tied, difficult children, I dreamed I was a master of cool, stoical repartee. "What have you been doing, Bobby?" Mother would ask. "I haven't," I'd answer. At home I thus saved myself from emotional exhaustion.

At school, however, I was extreme only in my conventional mediocrity, my colorless, distracted manner, which came from restless dreams of being admired. My closest friend was Eric Burckhard, the son of a professor of architecture at Harvard. The Burckhards came from Zurich and were very German, not like Ludendorff, but in the kindly, comical, nineteenth-century manner of Jo's German husband in *Little Men,* or in the manner of the crusading *sturm und drang* liberal scholars in decent old German *novelle.* "Eric's mother and father are *both* called Dr. Burckhard," my mother once said, and indeed there was something endearingly repellent about Mrs. Burckhard with her doctor's degree, her long, unstylish skirts, and her dramatic, dulling blond braids. Strangely the Burckhards' sober continental bourgeois house was without golden mean—everything was either hilariously old Swiss or madly modern. The Frau Doctor Burckhard used to serve mid-morning hot chocolate with rosettes of whipped cream, and receive her friends in a long, uncarpeted hall-drawing room with dowdy ferns and a yellow beeswaxed hardwood floor shining under a central skylight. On the wall there were large, expert photographs of what at a distance appeared to be Mont Blanc—they were in reality views of Frank Lloyd Wright's Japanese hotel.

I admired the Burckhards and felt at home in their house, and these feelings were only intensified when I discovered that my mother was always ill at ease with them. The heartiness, the enlightenment, and the bright, ferny greenhouse atmosphere were too much for her.

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Eric and I were too young to care for books or athletics. Neither of our houses had absorbing toys or an elevator to go up and down in. We were inseparable, but I cannot imagine what we talked about. I loved Eric because he was more popular than I and yet absolutely *sui generis* at the Brimmer School. He had a chalk-white face and limp, fine, white-blond hair. He was frail, elbowy, started talking with an enthusiastic Swiss jump, and would flush with bewilderment if interrupted. All the other boys at Brimmer wore little tweed golf suits with knickerbockers, but Eric always arrived in a black suit coat, a Byronic collar, and cuffless gray flannel trousers that almost hid his shoes. The long trousers were replaced on warm days by gray flannel shorts, such as were worn by children still in kindergarten. Eric's unenviable and freakish costumes were too old or too young. He accepted the whims of his parents with a buoyant tranquillity that I found unnatural.

My first and terminating quarrel with Eric was my fault. Eventually almost our whole class at Brimmer had whooping cough, but Eric's seizure was like his long trousers—untimely: he was sick a month too early. For a whole month he was in quarantine and forced to play by himself in a removed corner of the Public Garden. He was certainly conspicuous as he skiproped with his Swiss nurse under an out-of-the-way beech tree far from the pond and the swan boats. His parents had decided that this was an excellent opportunity for Eric to brush up on his German, and so the absoluteness of his quarantine was monstrously exaggerated by the fact that child and nurse spoke no English but only a guttural, British-sounding, Swiss German. Round and round and round the beech tree, he played intensely, frailly, obediently, until I began to tease him. Though motioned away by him, I came close. I had attracted some of the most popular Brimmer School boys. For the first time I had gotten favorable attention from several little girls. I came close. I shouted. Was Eric afraid of girls? I imitated his German. *Ein, swei, drei, BEER.* I imitated Eric's coughing. "He is afraid he will give you whooping cough if he talks or lets you come nearer," the nurse said in her musical Swiss-English voice. I came nearer. Eric flushed, grew white, bent double with coughing. He began to cry, and had to be led away from the Public Garden. For a whole week I routed Eric from the Garden daily, and for two or three days I was a center of interest.

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"Come see the Lake Geneva spider monkey!" I would shout. I don't know why I couldn't stop. Eric never told his father, I think, but when he recovered we no longer spoke. The breach was so unspoken and intense that our classmates were actually horrified. They even devised a solemn ritual for our reconciliation. We crossed our hearts, mixed spit, mixed blood. The reconciliation was hollow.

My parents' confidences and quarrels stopped each night at ten or eleven o'clock, when my father would hang up his tuxedo, put on his commander's uniform, and take a trolley back to the naval yard at Charlestown. He had just broken in a new car. Like a chauffeur, he watched this car, a Hudson, with an informed vigilance, always giving its engine hair-trigger little tinkerings of adjustment or friendship, always fearful lest its unbeautiful black body lose its outline and gloss of a man's patent leather dancing pump. He drove with flawless, almost instrumental, monotony. Mother, nevertheless, was forever encouraging him to walk or take taxis. She would tell him that his legs were growing vestigial from disuse and remind him of the time a jack had slipped and he had broken his leg while shifting a tire. "Alone and at night," she would say, "an amateur driver is unsafe in a car." Father sighed and obeyed—only, putting on a martyred and penny-saving face, he would keep his self-respect by taking the trolley rather than a taxi. Each night he shifted back into his uniform, but his departures from Revere Street were so furtive that several months passed before I realized what was happening—we had *two* houses! Our second house was the residence in the Naval Yard assigned to the third in command. It was large, had its own flagpole, and screen porches on three levels—yet it was something to be ashamed of. Whatever pomp or distinction its possession might have had for us was destroyed by an eccentric humiliation inflicted on Father by his superior, Admiral De Stahl, the commandant at Charlestown. De Stahl had not been consulted about our buying the 91 Revere Street house. He was outraged, stormed about "flaunting private fortunes in the face of naval tradition," and ordered my father to sleep on bounds at the Yard in the house provided for that purpose.

On our first Revere Street Christmas Eve, the telephone rang in the middle of dinner; it was Admiral De Stahl demanding Father's

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instant return to the Navy Yard. Soon Father was back in his uniform. In taking leave of my mother and grandparents he was, as was usual with him under pressure, a little evasive and magniloquent. "A woman works from sun to sun," he said, "but a sailor's watch is never done." He compared a naval officer's hours with a doctor's, hinted at surprise maneuvers, and explained away the uncommunicative arrogance of Admiral De Stahl: "The Old Man had to be hush-hush." Later that night, I lay in bed and tried to imagine that my father was leading his engineering force on a surprise maneuver through arctic wastes. A forlorn hope! "Hush-hush, hush-hush," whispered the snowflakes as big as street lamps as they broke on Father—broke and buried. Outside, I heard real people singing carols, shuffling snow off their shoes, opening and shutting doors. I worried at the meaning of a sentence I had heard quoted from the *Boston Evening Transcript*: "On this Christmas Eve, as usual, the whole of Beacon Hill can be expected to become a single old-fashioned open house—the names of mine host the Hill, and her guests will read like the contents of the Social Register." I imagined Beacon Hill changed to the snow queen's palace, as vast as the north pole. My father pressed a cold finger to his lip: "hush-hush," and led his surprise squad of sailors around an altar, but the altar was a tremendous cash register, whose roughened nickel surface was cheaply decorated with trowels, pyramids, and Arabic swirls. A great drawer helplessly chopped back and forth, unable to shut because choked with greenbacks. "Hush-hush!" My father's engineers wound about me with their eye-patches, orange sashes, and curtain-ring earrings, like the Gilbert and Sullivan pirates' chorus. . . . Outside on the streets of Beacon Hill, it was night, it was dismal, it was raining. Something disturbing had befallen the familiar and honorable Salvation Army band; its big drum and accordion were now accompanied by drunken voices howling: *The Old Gray Mare, she ain't what she used to be, when Mary went to milk the cow.* A sound of a bosun's whistle. Women laughing. Someone repeatedly rang our doorbell. I heard my mother talking on the telephone. "Your inebriated sailors have littered my doorstep with the dregs of Scollay Square." There was a gloating panic in her voice that showed she enjoyed the drama of talking to Admiral De Stahl. "Sir," she shrilled, "you have compelled my husband to leave me alone and

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defenseless on Christmas Eve!" She ran into my bedroom. She hugged me. She said, "Oh Bobby, it's such a comfort to have a man in the house." "I am not a man," I said, "I am a boy."

Boy—at that time this word had private associations for me; it meant weakness, outlawry, and yet was a status to be held onto. Boys were a sideline at my Brimmer School. The eight superior grades were limited to girls. In these grades, moreover, scholarship was made subservient to discipline, as if in contempt of the male's two idols: career and earning power. The school's tone, its *ton,* was a blend of the feminine and the military, a bulky reality governed in turn by stridency, smartness, and steadiness. The girls wore white jumpers, black skirts, stockings, and rectangular low-heeled shoes. An ex-West Pointer had been appointed to teach drill; and, at the moment of my enrollment in Brimmer, our principal, the hitherto staid Miss Manice, was rumored to be showing signs of age and of undermining her position with the school trustees by girlish, quite out of character, rhapsodies on the varsity basketball team, winner of two consecutive championships. The lower four grades, peaceful and lackadaisical, were, on the other hand, almost a separate establishment. Miss Manice regarded these "coeducated" classes with amused carelessness, allowed them to wear their ordinary clothes, and . . . carelessness, however, is incorrect—Miss Manice, in her administration of the lower school, showed the inconsistency and euphoria of a dual personality. Here she mysteriously shed all her Prussianism. She quoted Emerson and William James, disparaged the English, threatened to break with the past, and boldly coquetted with the non-military American genius by displaying movies illustrating the careers of Edison and Ford. Favored lower school teachers were permitted to use us as guinea pigs for mildly radical experiments. At Brimmer I *un*learned writing. The script that I had mastered with much agony at my first school was denounced as illegible; I was taught to print according to the Dalton Plan—to this day, as a result, I have to print even my two middle names and can only really *write* two words: "Robert" and "Lowell." Our instruction was subject to bewildering leaps. A performance by the quaint Venetian glass-blowers was followed by a tour of the Riverside Press. We heard Rudy Vallee, then heard spirituals sung by the Hampton Institute choir. We studied grammar from a formidable,

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unreconstructed textbook written by Miss Manice's father. There, I battled with figures of speech and Greek terminology: *Chiásmus,* the arrangement of corresponding words in opposite order; *Brachyology,* the failure to repeat an element that is supplied in more or less modified form. Then all this pedantry was nullified by the introduction of a new textbook which proposed to lift the face of syntax by using game techniques and drawings.

Physical instruction in the lower school was irregular, spontaneous, and had nothing of that swept and garnished barrack-room cameraderie of the older girls' gymnasium exercises. On the roof of our school building, there was an ugly concrete area that looked as if it had been intended for the top floor of a garage. Here we played tag, drew lines with chalk, and chose up sides for a kind of kids' soccer. On bright spring days, Mr. Newell, a submerged young man from Boston University, took us on botanical hikes through the Arboretum. He had an eye for inessentials—read us Martha Washington's poems at the Old State House, pointed out the roof of Brimmer School from the top of the Custom House, made us count the steps of the Bunker Hill Monument, and one rainy afternoon broke all rules by herding us into the South Boston Aquarium in order to give an unhealthy, gossipy, little lecture on the digestive faculties of the conger eel. At last Miss Manice seemed to have gotten wind of Mr. Newell's moods. For an afternoon or two she herself served as his substitute. We were walked briskly past the houses of Parkman and Dana, and assigned themes on the spunk of great persons who had overcome physical handicaps and risen to the top of the ladder. She talked about Elizabeth Barrett, Helen Keller; her pet theory, however, was that "women simply are not the equals of men." I can hear Miss Manice browbeating my white and sheepish father, "How can we stand up to you? Where are our Archimedeses, our Wagners, our Admiral Simses?" Miss Manice adored "Sir Walter Scott's *big bow-wow,*" wished "Boston had banned the morbid novels of the Brontës," and found nothing in the world "so simpatico" as the "strenuous life" lived by President Roosevelt. Yet the extravagant hysteria of Miss Manice's philanthropy meant nothing; Brimmer was entirely a woman's world—*dumkopf,* perhaps, but not in the least Quixotic, Brimmer was ruled by a woman's obvious aims and by her naive pragmatism. The quality of this regime, an

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extension of my mother's, shone out in full glory at general assemblies or when I sat with a handful of other boys on the bleachers of Brimmer's new Manice Hall. In unison our big girls sang "America"; back and forth our amazons tramped—their brows were wooden, their dress was black and white, and their columns followed standard-bearers holding up an American flag, the white flag of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the green flag of Brimmer. At basketball games against Miss Lee's or Miss Winsor's, it was our upper-school champions who rushed onto the floor, as feline and fateful in their pace as lions. This was our own immediate and daily spectacle; in comparison such masculine displays as trips to battle cruisers commanded by comrades of my father seemed eye-wash—the Navy moved in a realm as ghostlike and removed from my life as the ethereal acrobatics of Douglas Fairbanks or Peter Pan. I wished I were an older girl. I wrote Santa Claus for a field hockey stick. To be a boy at Brimmer was to be small, denied, and weak.

I was promised an improved future and taken on Sunday afternoon drives through the suburbs to inspect the boys' schools: Rivers, Dexter, Country Day. These expeditions were stratagems designed to give me a chance to know my father; Mother noisily stayed behind and embarrassed me by pretending that I had forbidden her to embark on "men's work." Father, however, seldom insisted, as he should have, on seeing the headmasters in person, yet he made an astonishing number of friends; his trust begat trust, and something about his silences encouraged junior masters and even school janitors to pour out small talk that was detrimental to rival institutions. At each new school, however, all this gossip was easily refuted; worse still Mother was always ready to cross-examine Father in a manner that showed that she was asking questions for the purpose of giving, not of receiving, instruction; she expressed astonishment that a wishy-washy desire to be everything to everybody had robbed a naval man of any reliable concern for his son's welfare. Mother regarded the suburban schools as "gerrymandered" and middle-class; after Father had completed his round of inspections, she made her own follow-up visits and told Mr. Dexter and Mr. Rivers to their faces that she was looking for a "respectable stop-gap" for her son's "three years between Brimmer and Saint Mark's." Saint Mark's was the boarding school for which I had been enrolled at birth, and was due to

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enter in 1930. I distrusted change, knew each school since kindergarten had been more constraining and punitive than its predecessor, and believed the suburban country day schools were flimsily disguised fronts for reformatories. With the egotistic, slightly paranoid apprehensions of an only child, I wondered what became of boys graduating from Brimmer's fourth grade, feared the worst—we were darkly imperiled, like some annual bevy of Athenian youths destined for the Minotaur. And to judge from my father, men between the ages of six and sixty did nothing but meet new challenges, take on heavier responsibilities, and lose all freedom to explode. A ray of hope in the far future was my white-haired Grandfather Winslow, whose unchecked commands and demands were always upsetting people for their own good—he was all I could ever want to be: the bad boy, the problem child, the commodore of his household.

When I entered Brimmer I was eight and a half. I was distracted in my studies, assented to whatever I was told, picked my nose whenever no one was watching, and worried our third-grade teacher by organizing creepy little gangs of boys at recess. I was girl-shy. Thick-witted, narcissistic, thuggish, I had the conventional prepuberty character of my age; whenever a girl came near me, my whole person cringed like a sponge wrung dry by a clenching fist. I was less rather than more literary than most children, but the girl I dreamed about continually had wheel-spoke black and gold eyelashes, double-length page-boy blond hair, a little apron, a bold, blunt face, a saucy, shivery way of talking, and . . . a paper body—she was the girl in John Tenniel's illustrations to *Alice in Wonderland*. The invigorating and symmetrical aplomb of my ideal Alice was soon enriched and nullified by a second face, when my father took me to the movies on the afternoon of one of Mother's headaches. An innocuous child's movie, the bloody, all-male *Beau Geste* had been chosen, but instead my father preferred a nostalgic tour of places he had enjoyed on shore leave. We went to the Touraine Hotel where he had first seen Pola Negri—where we too saw Pola Negri, sloppy-haired, slack, yawning, ravaged, unwashed . . . an Anti-Alice.

Our class belles, the Norton twins, Elie and Lindy, fell far short of the clean Alice and the abandoned Pola. Their prettiness, rather fluffy, freckled, bashful, might have escaped notice if they had been one instead of two, and if their manners had been less goodhumored,

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entertaining, and reliable. What mattered more than sex, athletics, or studies to us at Brimmer was our popularity; each child had an unwritten class-popularity poll inside his head. Everyone was ranked, and all day each of us mooned profoundly on his place, as it quivered like our blood or a compass needle with a thousand revisions. At nine character is, perhaps, too much *in ovo* for a child to be strongly disliked, but sitting next to Elie Norton, I glanced at her and gulped prestige from her popularity. We were not close at first; then nearness made us closer friends, for Elie had a gracious gift, the gift of gifts, I suppose, in a child: she forgot all about the popularity-rank of the classmate she was talking to. No moron could have seemed so uncritical as this airy, chatty, intelligent child, the belle of our grade. She noticed my habit of cocking my head on one side, shutting my eyes, and driving like a bull through opposition at soccer—wishing to amuse without wounding, she called me Buffalo Bull. At general assembly she would giggle with contented admiration at the upper-school girls in their penal black and white. "What bruisers, what beef-eaters! Dear girls," she would sigh, parroting her sophisticated mother, "we shall all become fodder for the governess classes before graduating from Brimmer." I felt that Elie Norton understood me better than anyone except my playful little Grandmother Winslow.

One morning there was a disaster. The boy behind me, no friend, had been tapping at my elbow for over a minute to catch my attention before I consented to look up and see a great golden puddle spreading toward me from under Elie's chair. I dared not speak, smile, or flicker an eyelash in her direction. She ran bawling from the classroom. Trying to catch every eye, yet avoid commitment, I gave sidelong and involuntary smirks at space. I began to feel manic with superiority to Elie Norton and struggled to swallow down a feeling of goaded hollowness—was I deserting her? Our teacher left us on our honor and ran down the hall. The class milled about in a hesitant hush. The girls blushed. The boys smirked. Miss Manice, the principal, appeared. She wore her whitish-brown dress with darker brown spots. Shimmering in the sunlight and chilling us, she stood mothlike in the middle of the classroom. We rushed to our seats. Miss Manice talked about how there was "nothing laughable about malaise." She broke off. Her face took on an ex-

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pression of invidious disgust. She was staring at me. . . . In the absentmindedness of my guilt and excitement, I had taken the nearest chair, the chair that Elie Norton had just left. "Lowell," Miss Manice shrieked, "are you going to sit there all morning like a bump on a log?"

When Elie Norton came back, there was really no break in her friendliness toward me, but there was something caved in, something crippled in the way I stood up to her and tried to answer her disengaged chatter. I thought about her all the time; seldom meeting her eyes now, I felt rich and raw in her nearness. I wanted passionately to stay on at Brimmer, and told my mother a fib one afternoon late in May of my last year. "Miss Manice has begged me to stay on," I said, "and enter the fifth grade." Mother pointed out that there had never been a boy in the fifth grade. Contradicted, I grew excited. "If Miss Manice has begged me to stay," I said, "why can't I stay?" My voice rose, I beat on the floor with my open hands. Bored and bewildered, my mother went upstairs with a headache. "If you won't believe me," I shouted after her, "why don't you telephone Miss Manice or Mrs. Norton?"

Brimmer School was thrown open on sunny March and April afternoons and our teachers took us for strolls on the polite, landscaped walks of the Public Garden. There I'd loiter by the old iron fence and gape longingly across Charles Street at the historic Boston Common, a now largely wrong-side-of-the-tracks park. On the Common there were mossy bronze reliefs of Union soldiers, and a captured German tank filled with smelly wads of newspaper. Everywhere there were grit, litter, gangs of Irish, Negroes, Latins. On Sunday afternoons orators harangued about Sacco and Vanzetti, while others stood about heckling and blocking the sidewalks. Keen young policemen, looking for trouble, lolled on the benches. At nightfall a police lieutenant on horseback inspected the Common. In the Garden, however, there was only Officer Lever, a single white-haired and mustached dignitary, who had once been the doorman at the Union Club. He now looked more like a member of the club. "Lever's a man about town," my Grandfather Winslow would say. "Give him Harris tweeds and a glass of Scotch, and I'd take him for Cousin Herbert." Officer Lever was without thoughts or deeds,

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but Back Bay and Beacon Hill parents loved him just for being. No one asked this hollow and leonine King Log to like children.

One day when the saucer magnolias were in bloom, I bloodied Bulldog Binney's nose against the pedestal of George Washington's statue in full view of Commonwealth Avenue; then I bloodied Dopey Dan Parker's nose; then I stood in the center of a sundial tulip bed and pelted a little enemy ring of third-graders with fertilizer. Officer Lever was telephoned. Officer Lever telephoned my mother. In the presence of my mother and some thirty nurses and children, I was expelled from the Public Garden. I was such a bad boy, I was told, "that *even* Officer Lever had been forced to put his foot down."

New England winters are long. Sunday mornings are long. Ours were often made tedious by preparations for dinner guests. Mother would start airing at nine. Whenever the air grew so cold that it hurt, she closed the den windows; then we were attacked by sour kitchen odors winding up a clumsily rebuilt dumb-waiter shaft. The windows were again thrown open. We sat in an atmosphere of glacial purity and sacrifice. Our breath puffed whitely. Father and I wore sleeveless cashmere jerseys Mother had bought at Filene's Basement. A do-it-yourself book containing diagrams for the correct carving of roasts lay on the arm of Father's chair. At hand were Big Bill Tilden on tennis, Capablanca on chess, newspaper clippings from Sidney Lenz's bridge column, and a magnificent tome with photographs and an acid breakdown of Sir Thomas Lipton's errors in the Cup Defender races. Father made little progress in these diversions, and yet one of the authors assured him that mastery demanded only willing readers who understood the meaning of English words. Throughout the winter a gray-whiteness glared through the single den window. In the apoplectic brick alley, a fire escape stood out against our sooty plank fence. Father believed that churchgoing was undignified for a naval man; his Sunday mornings were given to useful acts such as lettering his three new galvanized garbage cans: R.T.S. LOWELL—U.S.N.

Our Sunday dinner guests were often naval officers. Naval officers were not Mother's sort; very few people *were* her sort in those days, and that was her trouble—a very authentic, human, and

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plausible difficulty, which made Mother's life one of much suffering. She did not have the self-assurance for wide human experience; she needed to feel liked, admired, surrounded by the approved and familiar. Her haughtiness and chilliness came from apprehension. She would start talking like a *grande dame* and then stand back rigid and faltering, as if she feared being crushed by her own massively intimidating offensive.

Father's old Annapolis roommate, Commander Billy "Battleship Bilge" Harkness, was a frequent guest at Revere Street and one that always threw Mother off balance. Billy was a rough diamond. He made jokes about his "all-American family tree," and insisted that his name, pronounced H*ar*kness, should be spelled H*er*kness. He came from Louisville, Kentucky, drank whisky to "renew his Bourbon blood," and still spoke with an accent that sounded—so his colleagues said—"like a bran-fed stallion." Like my father, however, Commander Billy had entered the Naval Academy when he was a boy of fourteen; his Southernisms had been thoroughly rubbed away. He was teased for knowing nothing about race horses, mountaineers, folk ballads, hams, sour mash, tobacco . . . Kentucky Colonels. Though hardly an officer and a gentleman in the old Virginian style, he was an unusual combination of clashing virtues: he had led his class in the sciences and yet was what his superiors called "a *mathmaddition* with the habit of command." He and my father, the youngest men in their class, had often been shipmates. Bilge's executive genius had given color and direction to Father's submissive tenacity. He drank like a fish at parties, but was a total abstainer on duty. With reason Commander Harkness had been voted the man most likely to make a four-star admiral in the class of '07.

Billy called his wife *Jimmy* or *Jeems,* and had a rough friendly way of saying, "Oh, Jimmy's bright as a penny." Mrs. Harkness was an unpleasant rarity: she was the only naval officer's wife we knew who was also a college graduate. She had a flat flapper's figure, and hid her intelligence behind a nervous twitter of vulgarity and toadyism. "Charlotte," she would almost scream at Mother, "is this mirAGE, this MIRacle your *own* dining room!"

Then Mother might smile and answer in a distant, though cosy and amused, voice, "I usually manage to make myself pretty comfortable."

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Mother's comfort was chic, romantic, impulsive. If her silver service shone, it shone with hectic perfection to rebuke the functional domesticity of naval wives. She had determined to make her *ambiance* beautiful and luxurious, but wanted neither her beauty nor her luxury unaccompanied. Beauty pursued too exclusively meant artistic fatuity of a kind made farcical by her Aunt Sarah Stark Winslow, a beauty too lofty and original ever to marry, a prima donna on the piano, too high-strung ever to give a public recital. Beauty alone meant the maudlin ignominy of having one's investments managed by interfering relatives. Luxury alone, on the other hand, meant for Mother the "paste and fool's-gold polish" that one met with in the foyer of the Loew's Orpheum Theater. She loathed the "undernourishment" of Professor Burckhard's Bauhaus modernism, yet in moments of pique she denounced our pompous Myers mahoganies as "suitable for politicians at the Bellevue Hotel." She kept a middle-of-the-road position, and much admired Italian pottery with its fresh peasant colors and puritanical, clean-cut lines. She was fond of saying, "The French *do* have taste," but spoke with a double-edged irony which implied the French, with no moral standards to support their finish, were really no better than American yahoos. Mother's beautiful house was dignified by a rich veneer of the useful.

"I have always believed carving to be *the* gentlemanly talent," Mother used to proclaim. Father, faced with this opinion, pored over his book of instructions or read the section on table carving in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Eventually he discovered among the innumerable small, specialized Boston "colleges" an establishment known as a carving school. Each Sunday from then on he would sit silent and erudite before his roast. He blinked, grew white, looked winded, and wiped beads of perspiration from his eyebrows. His purpose was to reproduce stroke by stroke his last carving lesson, and he worked with all the formal rightness and particular error of some shaky experiment in remote control. He enjoyed quiet witticisms at the expense of his carving master—"a philosopher who gave himself all the airs of a Mahan!" He liked to pretend that the carving master had stated that "No two cuts are identical," *ergo*: "each offers original problems for the *executioner*." Guests were appeased

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by Father's saying, "I am just a plebe at this guillotine. Have a hunk of my roast beef hash."

What angered Father was Mrs. Harkness's voice grown merciless with excitement, as she studied his hewing and hacking. She was sure to say something tactless about how Commander Billy was "a stingy artist at carving who could shave the eagle off the dollar bill."

Nothing could stop Commander Billy, that born carver, from reciting verses:

"By carving my way
I lived on my pay;
This reeward, *though small,*
Beats none at all . . .

My carving paper-thin
Can make a guinea hin,
All giblets, bones, and skin,
Supply a party of tin."

And I, furious for no immediate reason, blurted out, "Mother, how much does Grandfather Winslow have to fork up to pay for Daddy's carving school?"

These Sunday dinners with the Harknesses were always woundingly boisterous affairs. Father, unnaturally outgoing, would lead me forward and say, "Bilge, I want you to meet my first coupon from the bond of matrimony."

Commander Billy would answer, "So this is the range-finder you are raising for future wars!" They would make me salute, stand at attention, stand at ease. "Angel-face," Billy would say to me, "you'll skipper a flivver."

"Jimmy" Harkness, of course, knew that Father was anxiously negotiating with Lever Brothers' Soap, and arranging for his resignation from the service, but nothing could prevent her from proposing time and again her "hens' toast to the drakes." Dragging Mother to her feet, Jimmy would scream, "To Bob and Bilgy's next battleship together!"

What Father and Commander Billy enjoyed talking about most was their class of '07. After dinner, the ladies would retire to the upstairs sitting room. As a special privilege I was allowed to remain

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at the table with the men. Over and over, they would talk about their ensigns' cruise around the world, escaping the "reeport," gunboating on the upper Yangtse during the Chinese Civil War, keeping sane and sanitary at Guantanamo, patroling the Golfo del Papayo during the two-bit Nicaraguan Revolution, when water to wash in cost a dollar a barrel and was mostly "alkali and wrigglers." There were the class casualties: Holden and Holcomb drowned in a foundered launch off Hampton Roads; "Count" Bowditch, killed by the Moros and famous for his dying words to Commander Harkness: "I'm all right. Get on the job, Bilge."

They would speak about the terrible 1918 influenza epidemic, which had killed more of their classmates than all the skirmishes or even the World War. It was an honor, however, to belong to a class which included "Chips" Carpender, whose destroyer, the *Fanning,* was the only British or American warship to force a German submarine to break water and surrender. It was a feather in their caps that three of their classmates, Bellinger, Reade, and another, should have made the first trans-Atlantic seaplane flight. They put their faith in teamwork, and Lindbergh's solo hop to Paris struck them as unprofessional, a newspaper trick. What made Father and Commander Billy mad as hornets was the mare's-nest made of naval administration by "deserving Democrats." Hadn't Secretary of State Bryan ordered their old battlewagon the *Idaho* to sail on a goodwill mission to Switzerland? "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan," Commander Billy would boom, "the pious swab had been told that Lake Geneva was annexed by the Adriatic." Another "guy with false gills," Josephus Daniels, "ordained by Divine Providence Secretary of the Navy," had refused to send Father and Billy to the war zone. "You are looking," Billy would declaim, "at martyrs in the famous victory of red tape. Our names are rubric." A man they had to take their hats off to was Theodore Roosevelt; Billy had been one of the lucky ensigns who had helped "escort the redoubtable Teddy to Panama." Perhaps because of his viciously inappropriate nickname, "Bilge," Commander Harkness always spoke with brutal facetiousness against the class *bilgers,* officers whose "services were no longer required by the service." In more charitable moods, Bilge would announce that he "meant to accumulate a lot of dough from complacent, well-meaning, although misguided West Point officers gullible enough to bet their shirts on the Army football team."

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"Let's have a squint at your *figger* and waterline, Bob," Billy would say. He'd admire Father's trim girth and smile familiarly at his bald spot. "Bob," he'd say, "you've maintained your displacement and silhouette unmodified, except for somewhat thinner top chafing gear."

Commander Billy's drinking was a "pain in the neck." He would take possession of Father's sacred "rhino" armchair, sprawl legs astraddle, make the tried and true framework groan, and crucify Mother by roaring out verbose toasts in what he called "me boozy cockney-h'Irish." He would drink to our cocktail shaker. "'Ere's to the 'older of the Lowelldom nectar," he would bellow. "Hip, hip, hooray for senor Martino, h'our h'old hipmate, 'elpmate, and hhonorary member of '07—h'always h'able to navigate and never says dry." We never got through a visit without one of Billy's "Bottoms up to the 'ead of the Nation. 'Ere's to herb-garden 'Erb." This was a swaggering dig at Herbert Hoover's notoriously correct, but insular, refusal to "imbibe anything more potent than Bromo-Seltzer" at a war-relief banquet in Brussels. Commander Billy's bulbous, water-on-the-brain forehead would glow and trickle with fury. Thinking on Herbert Hoover and Prohibition, he was unable to contain himself. "What a hick! We haven't been steered by a gentleman of parts since the redoubtable Teddy." He recited *wet* verses, such as the following inserted in Father's class book:

> *"I tread the bridge with measured pace;*
> *Proud, yet anguish marks my face—*
> *What worries me like crushing sin*
> *Is where on the sea can I buy dry gin?"*

In his cups, Commander Bilge acted as though he owned us. He looked like a human ash-heap. Cigar ashes buried the heraldic hedgehog on the ash tray beside him; cigar ashes spilled over and tarnished the golden stork embroidered on the table-cover; cigar ashes littered his own shiny blue-black uniform. Greedily Mother's eyes would brighten, drop and brighten. She would say darkly, "I was brought up by Papá to be like a naval officer, to be ruthlessly neat."

Once Commander Billy sprawled back so recklessly that the armchair began to come apart. "You see, Charlotte," he said to Mother, "at the height of my *climacteric* I am breaking Bob's chair."

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Harkness went in for tiresome, tasteless harangues against Amy Lowell, which he seemed to believe necessary for the enjoyment of his after-dinner cigar. He would point a stinking baby stogie at Mother. "'Ave a peteeto cigareeto, Charlotte," he would crow. "Puff on this whacking black cheroot, and you'll be a match for any reeking senorita *femme fatale* in the spiggotty republics, where blindness from Bob's bathtub hooch is still unknown. When you go up in smoke, Charlotte, remember the *Maine*. Remember Amy Lowell, that cigar-chawing, guffawing, senseless and meterless, multimillionheiress, heavyweight mascot on a floating fortress. Damn the *Patterns*! Full speed ahead on a cigareeto!"

Amy Lowell was never a welcome subject in our household. Of course, no one spoke disrespectfully of Miss Lowell. She had been so plucky, so *formidable, so beautifully and unblushingly immense,* as Henry James might have said. And yet, though irreproachably decent herself apparently, like Mae West she seemed to provoke indecorum in others. There was an anecdote which I was too young to understand: it was about Amy's getting her migraine headaches from being kept awake by the exercises of honeymooners in an adjacent New York hotel room. Amy's relatives would have liked to have honored her as a *personage,* a personage a little *outrée* perhaps, but perfectly within the natural order, like Amy's girlhood idol, the Duse. Or at least she might have been unambiguously tragic, short-lived, and a classic, like her last idol, John Keats. My parents piously made out a case for Miss Lowell's *Life of Keats,* which had killed its author and was so much more manly and intelligible than her poetry. Her poetry! But was *poetry* what one could call Amy's loud, bossy, unladylike *chinoiserie*—her free verse! For those that could understand it, her matter was, no doubt, blameless, but the effrontery of her manner made my parents relish the remark that "writing free verse was like playing tennis without a net."

Whenever Amy Lowell was mentioned Mother bridled. Not distinguishing, not caring whether her relative were praised or criticized, she would say, "Amy had the courage of her convictions. She worked like a horse." Mother would conclude characteristically, "Amy did insist on doing everything the *hard* way. I think, perhaps, that her brother, the President of Harvard, did more for *other* people."

Often Father seemed to pay little attention to the conversation of his guests. He would smack his lips, and beam absentmindedly

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and sensuously, as if he were anticipating the comforts of civilian life—a perpetual shore leave in Hawaii. The Harknesses, however, cowed him. He would begin to feel out the subject of his resignation and observe in a wheedle obscurely loaded with significance that "certain *cits,* no brighter than you or I, pay income taxes as large as a captain's yearly salary."

Commander Harkness, unfortunately, was inclined to draw improper conclusions from such remarks. Disregarding the "romance of commerce," he would break out into ungentlemanly tirades against capital. "Yiss, old Bob," he would splutter, "when I consider the ungodly hoards garnered in by the insurance and broking gangs, it breaks my heart. Riches, reaches, overreaches! If Bob and I had half the swag that Harkness of Yale has just given Lowell of Harvard to build Georgian houses for Boston quee-eers with British accents!" He rumbled on morosely about retired naval officers "forced to live like coolies on their half-pay. Hurrah for the Bull Moose Party!" he'd shout. "Hurrah for Boss Curley! Hurrah for the Bolshies!"

Nothing prevented Commander Billy from telling about his diplomatic mission in 1918, when "his eyes had seen the Bolshie on his native heath." He had been in Budapest "during the brief sway of Béla Kun. Was Béla going to give those Hunkyland moneybags and educators the boot into the arms of American philanthropy!"

Then Mother would say, hopefully, "Mamá always said that the *old* Hungarians *did* have taste. Billy, your reference to Budapest makes me heartsick for Europe. I am dying for Bob and Bobby to spend next summer at Etretat."

Commander Billy Harkness specialized in verses like "The Croix de Guerre":

"I toast the guy, who, crossing over,
Abode in London for a year,
The guy who to his wife and lover
Returned with conscience clean and clear,
Who nightly prowling Piccadilly
Gave icy stares to floozies wild,
And when approached said, 'Bilgy Billy
Is mama's darling angel child—'
Now he's the guy who rates the croy dee geer!"

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Mother, however, smiled mildly. "Billy," she would say, "my cousin, Admiral Ledyard Atkinson, always has a twinkle in his eye when he asks after your *vers de société*."

" 'Tommy' Atkins!" snorted Commander Billy. "I know Tommy better than my own mother. He's the first chapter in a book I'm secretly writing and leaving to the archives called *Wild Admirals I Have Known*. And now my bodily presence may no longer grace the inner sanctum of the Somerset Club, for fear Admiral Tommy'll assault me with five new chapters of his *Who Won the Battle of Jutland?*"

After the heat and push of Commander Billy, it was pleasant to sit in the shade of the Atkinsons. Cousin Ledyard wasn't exactly an admiral: he had been promoted to this rank during the World War and had soon reverted back to his old rank of captain. In 1926 he was approaching the retiring age and was still a captain. He was in charge of a big, stately, comfortable, but anomalous warship, which seldom sailed further than hailing distance from its Charlestown drydock. He was himself stately and anomalous. Serene, silver-maned, and Spanish-looking, Cousin Ledyard liked full-dress receptions and crowed like the cock of the walk in his cabin crowded with liveried Filipinos, Cuban trophies, and racks of experimental firearms, such as pepper-box pistols and a machine gun worked by electric batteries. He rattled off Spanish phrases, told first-hand adventure stories about service with Admiral Schley, and reminded one of some landsman and diplomat commanding a galleon in Philip II's Armada. With his wife's money he had bought a motor launch which had a teak deck and a newfangled diesel engine. While his warship perpetually rode at anchor, Cousin Ledyard was forever hurrying about the harbor in his launch. "Oh, Led Atkinson has dash and his own speedboat!" This was about the best my father could bring himself to say for his relative. Commander Billy, himself a man of action, was more sympathetic: "Tommy's about a hundred horse and buggy power." Such a dinosaur, however, had little to offer an '07 Annapolis graduate. Billy's final judgment was that Cousin Ledyard knew less *trig* than a schoolgirl, had been promoted through mistaken identity or merely as "window-dressing," and "was really plotting to put airplane carriers in square sails to stem the tide of our declining Yankee seamanship." Mother lost her enthusiasm for

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Captain Atkinson's stately chatter—he was "unable to tell one woman from another."

Cousin Ledyard's wife, a Schenectady Hoes distantly related to my still living Great-Grandmother Myers, was twenty years younger than her husband. This made her a trying companion; with the energy of youth she demanded the homage due to age. Once while playing in the Mattapoisett tennis tournament, she had said to her opponent, a woman her own age but married to a young husband, "I believe I'll call you Ruth; you can call me Mrs. Atkinson." She was a radiant Christian Scientist, darted about in smart serge suits and blouses frothing with lace. She filled her purse with Science literature and boasted without irony of "Boston's greatest grand organ" in the Christian Science mother temple on Huntington Avenue. As a girl, she had grown up with our Myers furniture. We dreaded Mrs. Atkinson's descents on Revere Street. She pooh-poohed Mother's taste, snorted at our ignorance of Myers family history, treated us as mere custodians of the Myers furniture, resented alterations, and had the memory of a mastodon for Cousin Cassie's associations with each piece. She wouldn't hear of my mother's distress from neuralgia, dismissed my asthma as "growing-pains," and sought to rally us by gossiping about healers. She talked a prim, sprightly babble. Like many Christian Scientists, she had a bloodless, euphoric, inexhaustible interest in her own body. In a discourse which lasted from her first helping of roast beef through her second demitasse, Mrs. Atkinson held us spellbound by telling how her healer had "surprised and evaporated a cyst inside a sac" inside her "major intestine."

I can hear my father trying to explain his resignation from the Navy to Cousin Ledyard or Commander Billy. Talking with an unnatural and importunate jocularity, he would say, "Billy Boy, it's a darned shame, but this State of Massachusetts doesn't approve of the service using its franchise and voting by mail. I haven't had a chance to establish residence since our graduation in '07. I think I'll put my blues in mothballs and become a *cit* just to prove I still belong to the country. The directors of Lever Brothers' Soap in Cambridge . . . I guess for *cits*, Billy, they've really got something on the ball, because they tell me they want me on their team."

Or Father, Cousin Ledyard, Commander Billy, and I would be sitting on after dinner at the dining-room table and talking man

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to man. Father would say, "I'm afraid I'll grow dull and drab with all this goldbricking ashore. I am too old for tennis singles, but too young for that confirmed state of senility known as golf."

Cousin Ledyard and Commander Billy would puff silently on their cigars. Then Father would try again and say pitifully, "I don't think a naval man can ever on the *outside* replace the friends he made during his years of wearing the blue."

Then Cousin Ledyard would give Father a polite, funereal look and say, "Speaking of golf, Bob, you've hit me below the belt. I've been flubbing away at the game for thirty years without breaking ninety."

Commander Billy was blunter. He would chaff Father about becoming a "beachcomber" or "purser for the Republican junior chamber of commerce." He would pretend that Father was in danger of being jailed for evading taxes to support "Uncle Sam's circus." *Circus* was Commander Billy's slang for the Navy. The word reminded him of a comparison, and once he stood up from the table and bellowed solemnly: "Oyez, oyez! Bob Lowell, our bright boy, our class baby, is now on a par with 'Rattle-Ass Rats' Richardson, who resigned from us to become press agent for Sells-Floto Circus, and who writes me: 'Bilgy Dear—Beating the drum ahead of the elephants and the spangled folk, I often wonder why I run into so few of my classmates.' "

Those dinners, those apologies! Perhaps I exaggerate their embarrassment because they hover so grayly in recollection and seem to anticipate ominously my father's downhill progress as a civilian and Bostonian. It was to be expected, I suppose, that Father should be in irons for a year or two, while becoming detached from his old comrades and interests, while waiting for the new life.

I used to sit through the Sunday dinners absorbing cold and anxiety from the table. I imagined myself hemmed in by our new, inherited Victorian Myers furniture. In the bleak Revere Street dining room, none of these pieces had at all that air of unhurried condescension that had been theirs behind the summery veils of tissue paper in Cousin Cassie Julian-James's memorial volume. Here, table, highboy, chairs, and screen—mahogany, cherry, teak—looked nervous and disproportioned. They seemed to wince, touch elbows, shift from

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foot to foot. High above the highboy, our gold National Eagle stooped forward, plastery and doddering. The Sheffield silver-plate urns, more precious than solid sterling, peeled; the bodies of the heraldic mermaids on the Mason-Myers crest blushed a metallic copper tan. In the harsh New England light, the bronze sphinxes supporting our sideboard looked as though manufactured in Grand Rapids. All too clearly no one had worried about synchronizing the grandfather clock's minutes, days, and months with its mellow old Dutch seascape-painted discs for showing the phases of the moon. The stricken, but still striking gong made sounds like steam banging through pipes. Colonel Myers' monumental Tibetan screen had been impiously shortened to fit it for a low Yankee ceiling. And now, rough and gawky, like some Hindu water buffalo killed in mid-rush but still alive with mad momentum, the screen hulked over us . . . and hid the pantry door.

Our real blue-ribbon-winning *bête noire* was of course the portrait of Cousin Cassie's father, Mordecai Myers' fourth and most illustrious son: Colonel Theodorus Bailey Myers. The Colonel, like half of our new portraits, was merely a collateral relation; though really as close to us as James Russell Lowell, no one called the Colonel "Great Grand Uncle," and Mother playfully pretended that her mind was overstrained by having to remember his full name, rank, and connection. In the portrait, Colonel Theodorus wore a black coat and gray trousers, an obsequiously conservative costume which one associated with undertakers and the musicians at Symphony Hall. His spats were pearl gray plush with pearl buttons. His mustache might have been modeled on the mustache of a bartender in a Western. The majestic Tibetan screen enclosed him as though he were an ancestor-god from Lhasa, a blasphemous yet bogus attitude. Mr. Myers' colonel's tabs were crudely stitched to a civilian coat; his New York Yacht Club button glowed like a carnation; his vainglorious picture frame was a foot and a half wide. Forever, his right hand hovered over a glass dome that covered a model locomotive. He was vaguely Middle-Eastern and waiting. A lady in Mother's sewing circle had pertly interpreted this portrait as, "King Solomon about to receive the Queen of Sheba's shares in the Boston and Albany Railroad." Gone now was the Colonel's place of honor at Cousin Cassie's Washington mansion; gone was his

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charming satire on the belles of 1850, entitled, *Nothing to Wear,* which had once been quoted "throughout the length and breadth of the land as generally as was Bret Harte's *Heathen Chinee";* gone was his priceless collection of autographed letters of *all* the Signers of the Declaration of Independence—he had said once, "my letters will be my tombstone." Colonel Theodorus Bailey Myers had never been a New Englander. His family tree reached to no obscure Somersetshire yeoman named Winslowe or Lowle. He had never even, like his father, Mordecai, gloried in a scarlet War of 1812 waistcoat. His portrait was an indifferent example from a dull, bad period. The Colonel's only son had sheepishly changed his name from Mason-Myers to Myers-Mason.

Waiting for dinner to end and for the guests to leave, I used to lean forward on my elbows, support each cheekbone with a thumb, and make my fingers meet in a clumsy Gothic arch across my forehead. I would stare through this arch and try to make life stop. Out in the alley the sun shone irreverently on our three garbage cans lettered: R. T. S. LOWELL—U. S. N. When I shut my eyes to stop the sun, I saw first an orange disc, then a red disc, then the portrait of Major Myers apotheosized, as it were, by the sunlight lighting the blood smear of his scarlet waistcoat. Still there was no *coup de théatre* about the Major as he looked down on us with his portly young man's face of a comfortable upper New York State patroon and the friend of Robert Livingston and Martin Van Buren. Great-great-Grandfather Myers had never frowned down in judgment on a Salem witch. There was no allegory in his eyes, no *Mayflower.* Instead he looked peacefully at his sideboard, his cut-glass decanters, his cellaret—the worldly bosom of the Mason-Myers mermaid engraved on a silver-plated urn. If he could have spoken, Mordecai would have said, "My children, my blood, accept graciously the loot of your inheritance. We are all dealers in second-hand furniture."

The man who seems in my memory to sit under old Mordecai's portrait is not my father, but Commander Billy—*the* Commander after Father had thrown in his commission. There Billy would sit glowing, perspiring, bragging. Despite his rowdiness, he even then breathed the power that would make him a vice-admiral and hero in World War II. I can hear him boasting in lofty language of how he had stood up for democracy in the day of Lenin and Béla Kun; of

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how he "practiced the sport of kings" (i.e., commanded a destroyer) and combed the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Black Seas gypsy fashion—seldom knowing what admiral he served under or where his next meal or load of fuel oil was coming from.

It always vexed the Commander, however, to think of the strings that had been pulled to have Father transferred from Washington to Boston. He would ask Mother, "Why in God's name should a man with Bob's brilliant cerebellum go and mess up his record by actually *begging* for that impotent field nigger's job of second in command at the defunct Boston Yard!"

I would squirm. I dared not look up because I knew that the Commander abhorred Mother's dominion over my father, thought my asthma, supposedly brought on by the miasmal damp of Washington, a myth, and considered our final flight to Boston a scandal.

My mother, on the other hand, would talk back sharply and explain to Billy that there was nothing second-string about the Boston Yard except its commandant, Admiral De Stahl, who had gone into a frenzy when he learned that my parents, supposed to live at the naval yard, had set themselves up without his permission at 91 Revere Street. The Admiral had *commanded* Father to reside at the yard, but Mother had bravely and stubbornly held on at Revere Street.

"A really great person," she would say, "knows how to bend."

Then Commander Harkness would throw up his hands in despair and make a long buffoonish speech. "Would you believe it?" he'd say. "De Stahl, the anile slob, would make Bob Lowell sleep seven nights a week and twice on Sundays in that venerable twenty-room pile provided for his third in command at the yard. 'Bobby me boy,' the Man says, 'henceforth I will that you sleep wifeless. You're to push your beauteous mug into me boudoir each night at ten-thirty and each morn at six. And don't mind the Missus De Stahl,' the old boy squeaks; 'we're just two oldsters as weak as babies. But Robbie Boy,' he says, 'don't let me hear of you hanging on your telephone wire and bending off the ear of that forsaken frau of yours sojourning on Revere Street. I might have to phone you in a hurry, if I should happen to have me stroke.' "

Taking hold of the table with both hands, the Commander tilted his chair backwards and gaped down at me with sorrowing Gargantuan wonder: "I know why Young Bob is an only child."

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Walker Percy

THE MAN ON THE TRAIN

Three Existential Modes

There is no such thing, strictly speaking, as a literature of alienation. In the re-presenting of alienation the category is reversed and becomes something entirely different. There is a great deal of difference between an alienated commuter riding a train and this same commuter reading a book about an alienated commuter riding a train. (On the other hand, Huck Finn's drifting down the River is somewhat the same as a reader's reading about Huck Finn drifting down the River.) The nonreading commuter exists in true alienation which is unspeakable; the reading commuter rejoices in the speakability of his alienation and in the new triple alliance of himself, the alienated character, and the author. His mood is affirmatory and glad: Yes! that is how it is!—which is an aesthetic reversal of alienation. It is related that when Kafka read his work aloud to his friends, they would all roar with laughter until tears came to their eyes. Neither Kafka nor his reader is alienated in the movement of art, for each achieves a reversal through its re-presenting. To picture a truly alienated man, picture a Kafka to whom it had never occurred to write a word. The only literature of alienation is an alienated literature, that is, a bad art, which is no art at all. An Erle Stanley Gardner novel is a true exercise in alienation. A man who finishes his twentieth Perry Mason is that much nearer total despair than when he started.

I hasten to define what I mean by alienation, which has become almost as loose an epithet as existentialism (if you do not agree with me, it is probably because you are alienated). I mean that whereas one commuter may sit on the train and feel himself quite at home,

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seeing the passing scene as a series of meaningful projects full of signs which he reads without difficulty, another commuter, although he has no empirical reason for being so, although he has satisfied the same empirical needs as commuter A, is alienated. To say the least, he is bored; to say the most, he is in pure anxiety; he is horrified at his surroundings—he might as well be passing through a lunar landscape and the signs he sees are absurd or at least ambiguous. (It will not be necessary at this point to consider the further possibility that commuter A's tranquillity is no guarantee against alienation, that in fact he may be more desperately lost to himself than B in the sense of being anonymous, the "one" of "one says.")

Alienation, in its turn, is itself a reversal of the objective-empirical. This is a purely existential reversal and has nothing to do with art. It is very simply illustrated in the case of the alienated commuter. This man—though he will have met every "need" which can be abstracted by the objective-empirical method: sexual needs, nutritional, emotional, in-group needs, needs for a productive orientation, creativity, community service—this man may nevertheless be alienated. Moreover he is apt to be alienated in proportion to his staking everything on the objective-empirical. By his alienation, the objective-empirical categories are reversed. What causes anxiety in the one is the refuge from anxiety in the other. For example, speaking objectively-empirically, it is often said that it is no wonder people are anxious nowadays, what with the possibility that the Bomb might fall any minute. The Bomb would seem to be sufficient reason for anxiety, yet as it happens the reverse is the truth. The contingency "what if the Bomb should fall?" is not only not a cause of anxiety in the alienated man but is one of his few remaining refuges from it. When everything else fails, we may always turn to our good friend just back from Washington or Geneva who obliges us with his sober second-thoughts—"I can tell you this much, I am profoundly disturbed . . ."—and each of us has what he came for, the old authentic thrill of the Bomb and the Coming of the Last Days. Like Ortega's romantic, the heart's desire of the alienated man is to see vines sprouting through the masonry. The real anxiety question, the question no one asks because no one wants to, is the reverse: What if the Bomb should *not* fall? What then?

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The estrangement of the existing self is not capable of being grasped by the objective-empirical method simply because the former is specified by the latter as its reverse. I would like to avoid a polemical tone here. I do not wish to be understood as attacking the objective-empirical method and contemning its truth and beauty and fruitfulness—which the European existentialists do indiscriminately while at the same time living very well on its fruits—but as stating the fact of the reversal: it does happen that the *Dasein* or existing self characteristically reverses objective-empirical sociological categories and discovers in them not the principle of its health but the root-source of its alienation.

To illustrate the specific character of the reversal: it is just when the Method tries to grasp and categorize the existential trait that it is itself reversed and becomes a powerful agent, not of progress, but of alienation. It is just when the alienated commuter reads books on mental hygiene which abstract immanent goals from existence that he comes closest to despair. One has only to let the mental-health savants set forth their own ideal of sane living, the composite reader who reads their books seriously and devotes every ounce of his strength to the pursuit of the goals erected: emotional maturity, inclusiveness, productivity, creativity, belongingness—there will emerge, far more faithfully than I could portray him, the candidate for suicide. Take these two sentences: "The most profound of all human needs, the prime requisite for successful living, is to be emotionally inclusive. Socrates, Jesus, Buddha, St Francis were emotionally inclusive." These words tremble with anxiety and alienation, even though I would not deny that they are, in their own eerie way, true. The alienated commuter shook like a leaf when he read them.

To go back to the aesthetic reversal of alienation by art: literature, like a polarizing crystal, makes a qualitative division among existential traits accordingly as it transmits some more or less intact, reverses some, and selectively polarizes others, transmitting certain elements and canceling others. Alienation is reversed: there can no more be a re-presenting of alienation than Kierkegaard's category of trial, for it, like trial, absolutely transcends the objective-empirical; Job's and Abraham's trial are lost in the telling. The categories, rotation and repetition, on the other hand, not being purely existential

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but aesthetic-existential, are transmitted. Yet they are transmitted with a difference. Rotation is conveyed more or less intact whereas repetition is accomplished only by a mediate act of identification. Thus, reading about Huck going down the River or Tenente Frederick Henry escaping from the carabinieri in Italy is somewhat like going down the River and escaping. It is by virtue of the fact that rotation is the quest for the new as the new, the reposing of all hope in what may lie around the bend, a mode of experience which is much the same in the reading as in the experiencing. But repetition, in order to occur, requires a more radical identification. Thus when Charles Gray in Marquand's novel returns to Clyde, Massachusetts; or when Tom Wolfe returns to the shabby boarding house in St. Louis—the reader can experience repetition only if he imagines that he too is a native of Clyde or had lived in St. Louis. (He doesn't have to imagine he is Huck—it is he, the reader, who is drifting down the River.)

The moments of rotation and repetition are of such peculiar interest to the contemporary alienated consciousness because they represent the two obvious alternatives or deliverances from alienation. The man riding a train—or his analogues, Huck on a raft, Philip Marlowe in a coupe—is of an extraordinary interest because this situation realizes in a concrete manner the existential placement of all three modes, alienation, rotation, and repetition. The train-rider can, as in the case of the commuter on the eight-fifteen, actually incarnate, as we shall see in a moment, the elements of alienation. On the other hand, the fugitive in the English thriller who catches the next available train from Waterloo station and who finds himself going he knows not where, experiences true rotation; equally, the exile or amnesiac who, thinking himself on a routine journey, suddenly catches sight of a landmark which strikes to the heart and who with every turn of the wheel comes that much closer to the answer to who am I?—this one has stumbled into pure repetition (as when Captain Ryder alighted from his blacked-out train to find himself—back in Brideshead).

To begin with, the alienated commuter riding the eight-fifteen actually finds himself in a situation in which his existential placement in the world, the subject-object split, the *pour soi-ens soir,* is physically realized. In an absolute partitioning of reality, he is both

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in the world he is traveling through and not in it. Beyond all doubt he is in Metuchen, New Jersey during the few seconds the train stops there, yet in what a strange sense is he there—he passes through without so much as leaving his breath behind. Even if this is the one-thousandth time he has stopped there, even if he knows a certain concrete pillar better than anything else in the world, yet he remains as total a stranger to Metuchen as if he had never been there. He passes through, the transient possible I through the static indefeasible It. The landscape through which he passes for the thousandth time has all the traits of the *ens soir;* it is dense, sodden, impenetrable, and full of itself; it is exactly what it is, no more, no less, and as such it is boring in the original sense of the word. It is worse than riding a subway through blackness because the familiar things one sees are not neutral or nugatory; they are aggressively assertive and thrust themselves upon one: they bore. Whereas beyond the subway window there is nothing at all. As is especially noticeable on the subway, the partition exists as well between oneself and one's fellow-commuters, a partition which is impenetrable by anything short of disaster. It is only in the event of a disaster, the wreck of the eight-fifteen, that one is *enabled* to discover his fellow-commuter as a comrade; thus, the favorite scene of novels of good will in the city: the folks who discover each other and help each other when disaster strikes. (Do we have here a clue to the secret longing for the Bomb and the Last Days? Does the eschatological thrill conceal the inner prescience that it will take a major catastrophe to break the partition?)

Actually the partition is closer than this. It exists as well between me and my own body. One's own hand participates in the everydayness of the *ens soir* and is both dense and invisible: it is only on the rarest occasions that one may see his own hand, either by a deliberate effort of seeing, as in the case of Sartre's Roquentin; or through the agency of disaster, as when the commuter on the New York Central had a heart attack and had to be taken off at Fordham station: upon awakening he gazed with astonishment at his own hand, turning it this way and that as though he had never seen it before.

To illustrate the zoning of the alienated train ride: suppose the eight-fifteen breaks down between Mount Vernon and New Rochelle,

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breaks down beside a yellow cottage with a certain lobular stain on the wall which the commuter knows as well as he knows the face of his wife. Suppose he takes a stroll along the right-of-way while the crew is at work. To his astonishment he hears someone speak to him; it is a man standing on the porch of the yellow house. They talk and the man offers to take him the rest of the way in his car. The commuter steps into the man's back yard and enters the house. This trivial event, which is of no significance objectively-empirically, is of considerable significance aesthetically-existentially. A zone-crossing has taken place. It is of extraordinary interest to the commuter that he may step *out* of the New York Central right-of-way and into the yellow house. It is of extraordinary interest to stand in the kitchen and hear from the owner of the house who he is, how he came to build the house, etc. For he, the commuter, has done the impossible: he has stepped through the mirror into the *ens soir*.

Zone-crossing is of such great moment to the alienated I because the latter is thereby able to explore the It while at the same time retaining his option of non-commitment. The movie *It Happened One Night* stumbled into this fertile field when it showed Clark and Claudette crossing zones without a trace of involvement, from bus to hitch-hiking to meadow to motel. It is a triumph of rotation to be able to wander into Farmer Jones's barnyard, strike up an acquaintance, be taken for a human being, then pass on impassible as a ghost. The reason the formula ran into diminishing returns was that this particular zone-crossing created its own zone, and its imitators, instead of zone-crossing, were following a well-worn track.

A more memorable zone-crossing was Hemingway's fisherman leaving the train in the middle of the Minnesota woods and striking out on his own. To leave the fixed right-of-way at a random point and enter the trackless woods is a superb rotation. Swedes know this better than anyone else. Travelers in Sweden report two national traits: boredom and love of the North country—alienation and rotation. This penchant for taking to the woods reverses the objective-empirical: when Swedish planners took note of this particular "recreational need" and provided wooded areas in the vicinity of Stockholm, the Swedes were not interested. And it is no coincidence that when the Swedish government did take measures to set aside the North country for hiking, there occurred a sudden increase of Swedish tourists in quaint out-of-the-way *English* villages.

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II

The road is better than the inn, said Cervantes—and by this he meant that rotation is better than the alienation of everydayness. The best part of Huckleberry Finn begins when Huck escapes from his old man's shack and ends when he leaves the River for good at Phelps' farm. Mark Twain hit upon an admirable rotation, whether he knew it or not (and probably did not or he would not have written the last hundred pages). A man who sets out adrift down the Mississippi has thrice over insured the integrity of his possibility without the least surrender of access to actualization—there is always that which lies around the bend. He is, to begin with, on water, the mobile element; he is, moreover, adrift, the random on the mobile; but most important, he is on the Mississippi which, during the entire journey, flows *between* states: he is neither in Illinois or Missouri but in a privileged zone between the two. To appreciate the nicety of this placement, consider the extremes. A less radical possibility would be his floating down the Hudson River; one sees at once how rotation is hindered here: one remains entirely *within* New York state; there is no zoning; there is no sense of pushing free of land into a privileged zone of the mobile. No one ever had the ambition of floating down the Hudson on a raft. On the other hand, the more radical possibility, his finding himself adrift on the ocean, is too rarified a possible for rotation. The absolutely new, the exotic landfall, is too foreign to the *pour soi* to exhibit by contrast the freedom of the self. Compare, for example, the fantastic rotation of Tom Sawyer floating in his balloon over the Sahara in his latter-day adventures, compare this with Huck and Jim slipping by Cairo at night. The former is the standard comic-book rotation, the latter is a remarkable coup, the snatching of freedom from under the very nose of the *ens soir*. A Cairo businessman sits reading his paper, immured in everydayness, while not two hundred yards away Huck slips by in the darkness. Huck has his cake and eats it: he wins pure possibility without losing access to actualization. The *ens soir* is never farther away than the nearest towhead; the sweetest foray into the actual is a landing in the willows and a striking out across the fields to the nearest town. It is noteworthy that the success of his sojourns ashore has as its condition the keeping open of a line of retreat to the beachhead where the

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raft lies hidden—and in fact the times ashore do most characteristically and happily end disastrously with a headlong flight from some insuperable difficulty and a casting off into the mainstream leaving the pursuers shaking their fists on the bank. What does happen when the beachhead is lost for good and Huck and Jim are stranded ashore? Rotation and possibility are both lost and in their stead we have dreary Tom and his eternal play-acting.

The role of Jim should not be overlooked. The chance encounter with Jim on Jackson's Island is a pre-puberty version of *la solitude à deux*. When the Bomb falls and the commuter picks his way through the rubble of Fifth Avenue to Central Park, there to take up his abode in an abandoned toolshed à la Robert Nathan, everything depends upon his meeting *her* and meeting her accidentally (or, as they say in Hollywood, meeting cute: note here the indispensability of chance as an ingredient of rotation; he may not seek an introduction to her but must become entangled in her wirehaired's leash). To be sure, a certain narrow range of solitary rotation is possible: Huck's life on Jackson's Island before meeting Jim is very fine, but after catching the fish, eating it, taking a nap, that's about the end of it. He meets Jim none too soon. Crusoe, it is true, achieved a memorable rotation, but it is only on the condition of the abiding possibility of the encounter; at any moment and around the next curve of the beach, he may meet. . .

Rotation may occur by a trafficking in zones, the privileged zone of possibility which is the River in Huck Finn; the vagrancy zones of Steinbeck: ditches, vacant lots, whorehouses, weed-grown boilers, packing cases; the para-bourgeois zone of *You Can't Take It With You* with Jean Arthur and her jolly eccentric family (an exceedingly short-lived rotation: what could be drearier than the madcap adventures of these jolly folks experienced a second time?). Or it may occur simply by getting clean away. Huck's escape is complete because he is actually thought dead. The getting clean away requires a moral as well as a physical freedom. Rotation is eminently attractive to Pepper Young living out his life with Linda in Elmwood —yet he may not simply walk out one fine day. If, however, on his annual trip to Chicago for Father Young, the train should be wrecked and he should develop amnesia—that is another matter. A notable escape is managed by Tenente Frederick Henry in *A Farewell*

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to Arms in his getting clean away from the carabinieri at Caporetto by diving into the river. Later he boards a freight car carrying guns packed in grease. A very fine rotation occurs here: "—it was very fine under the canvas and pleasant with the guns." What is notable about Henry's escape is that it is rotation raised to the third power. First, there is the American in Bohemia, in Paris, in Pamplona: he has gotten clean away from the everydayness of Virginia; next, there is los Ingles lying on a needle-covered forest floor in the Spanish Civil War, or Tenente Henry in the Italian infantry: he has gotten clean away from the everydayness of Bohemia; next, there is Tenente Henry escaping the everydayness of the Italian army. (And later even to the fourth power: Catherine and the baby die and he gets clean away from them and walks back to the hotel in the rain. This last is a concealed reversal, for although it is offered as an undesired turn of events, a tragedy, it clearly would not have done for Catherine and Henry to have settled down and raised a family.)

Hemingway's literature of rotation, escape within escape, approaches asymptotically the term of all rotation: amnesia. Amnesia is the perfect device of rotation and is available to anyone and everyone, in the same way that double suicide is available to any and all tragedians. Whether it is Smitty on his way to Liverpool or Pepper on his way to Chicago, amnesia is the supreme rotation. Who can blame the soap-opera writer if he returns to it again and again even after he has been kidded about it? Life in Elmwood with Linda and Father and Mother Young achieves a degree of alienation such as was never dreamed of by Joseph K. in Mitteleuropa; the difference between them is nothing less than the difference between the despair that knows itself and the despair that does not know itself. Since Bohemia is despised by Pepper, since also the zone-sanctuaries of the Mississippi, Steinbeck's friendly whorehouse, Nathan's toolshed, and the Bomb are closed to him; and since the obvious alternative to life in Elmwood, suicide, is also unacceptable—only amnesia remains. From the literal everydayness of the soap opera, amnesia is the one, the only, the perfect rotation. Yet medically speaking, amnesia, attractive though it is as a rotative device, is not its final asymptotic term. For, though it is very gratifying for Pepper to come to himself while walking in Grant Park and with no recollection of Linda, and though it is all very well for him to meet *her*, the stranger, to conceal

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her from the police after she, in an act of desperation, snatches a purse—it is only a question of time before everydayness overtakes them. Whether it is Elmwood or the toolshed in the park, Linda or the fugitive girl, Pepper being Pepper, hardly a week passes before he is again in the full grip of everydayness and once more a candidate for suicide. Perfect rotation could only be achieved by a progressive amnesia in which the forgetting kept pace with time so that every corner turned, every face seen, is a rotation. Every night with Linda is a night with a stranger, the lustful rotative moment of the double plot in which one man is mistaken for another and is called upon to be husband to the beautiful neglected wife of the other. One man's everydayness is another man's rotation.

The modern literature of alienation is in reality the triumphant reversal of alienation through its re-presenting. It is not an existential solution such as Hölderlin's Homecoming or Heidegger's openness to being, but is an aesthetic victory of comradeliness, a recognition of plight in common. Its motto is not "I despair and do not know that I despair" but "At least we know that we are lost to ourselves"—which is very great knowledge indeed. A literature of rotation, however, does not effect the reversal of its category, for it is nothing more or less than one mode of escape from alienation. Its literary re-presenting does not change its character in the least for it is, to begin with, the category of the New. Both Kierkegaard and Marcel mention rotation but as an experiential, a travel category rather than an aesthetic. One tires of one's native land, says Victor Eremita, and moves abroad; or one becomes *Europamüde* and goes to America. Marcel sees it both as a true metaphysical concern to discover the intimate at the heart of the remote and as an absurd optical illusion—"for Hohenschwangau represents to the Munich shopkeeper just what Chambord means to a tripper from Paris." But what is notable about it for our purposes, this quest for the remote, is that it is peculiarly suited to re-presenting; it transmits through art without the loss of a trait. As a mode of deliverance from alienation, experiencing it directly is no different from experiencing it through art.

The Western movie is an exercise in rotation stripped of every irrelevant trait. The stranger dropping off the stagecoach into a ritual adventure before moving on is the Western equivalent of Huck's

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foray ashore, with the difference that where Huck loses the stranger wins—but win or lose it is all the same: one must in any case be on the move. The shift from east to west accomplishes a rotation from the organic to the inorganic, from the green shade of Huck's willow towhead (or Novalis's leafy bower) to the Southwestern desert. But both the chlorophyll rotation (Hudson's Riolama) and John Ford's desert are themselves rotations from the human nest, the family familiar, Sartre's category of the viscous. The true smell of everydayness is the smell of Sunday dinner in the living room. Rotation from the human organic may occur to the animal organic (Mowgli in the wolf den), to the vegetable organic (Hudson in Riolama), to the inorganic (John Wayne in the desert), or back again. To the alienated man of the East who has rotated to Santa Fe, the green shade of home becomes a true rotation; to his blood brother in Provence, it is the mesa and the cobalt sky. The I-It dichotomy is translated intact in the Western movie. Who is he, this Gary Cooper person who manages so well to betray nothing of himself whatsoever, who is he but I myself, the locus of pure possibility? He is qualitatively different from everyone else in the movie. Whereas they are what they are—the loyal but inept friend, the town comic, the greedy rancher, the craven barber—the stranger exists as pure possibility in the axis of nought-infinity. He is either nothing, that is, the unrisked possibility who walks through the town as a stranger and keeps his own counsel —above all he is silent—or he is perfectly realized actuality, the conscious *ens soir*, that is to say the Godhead, who, when at last he does act, acts with a ritual and gestural perfection. Let it be noted that it is all or nothing: everything depends on his gestural perfection —an aesthetic standard which is appropriated by the movie-goer at a terrific cost in anxiety. In the stately dance of rotation, Destry when challenged borrows a gun and shoots all the knobs off the saloon sign. *But what if he did not? What if he missed?* The stranger in the movie walks the tightrope over the abyss of anxiety and he will not fail. But what of the movie-goer? The stranger removes his hat in the ritual rhythm and wipes his brow with his sleeve, but the movie-goer's brow is dry when he emerges and he has a headache and if he tried the same gesture he might bump into his nose. Both Gary Cooper and the movie-goer walk the tightrope of anxiety, but Gary Cooper only seems to: his rope is only a foot above the

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ground. The movie-goer is over the abyss. The young man in a Robert Nathan novel or in a Huxleyan novel of the Days After the Bomb may rest assured that if he lies under his bush in Central Park, sooner or later *she* will trip over him. But what of the reader? He falls prey to his desperately inauthentic art by transposing the perfect aesthetic rotation to the existential: he will lie in his green shade until doomsday and no fugitive Pier Angeli will ever trip over him. He must seek an introduction; his speech will be halting, his gestures will not come off, and having once committed himself to the ritual criterion of his art and falling short of it, he can only be—nothing. In no event can he become a person; not even Cooper can do that, for the choice lies between the perfected actual and nothing at all. His alienated art of rotation instead of healing him catches him up in a spiral of despair whose only term is suicide or total self-loss.

III

A man riding a train may incarnate alienation (the commuter) or rotation (*i.e.*, the English variety: "I was taking a long delayed holiday. In the same compartment and directly opposite me, I noticed a young woman who semed to be in some sort of distress. To my astonishment she beckoned to me. I had planned to get off at North Ealing, but having nothing better to do, I decided to stay on to render what assistance I could . . .") But he is also admirably placed to encounter the Return or repetition. Tom Wolfe, lying in his berth while the train passes by night through lonely little midwestern towns, is alienation re-presented and so reversed. He may be lost and by the wind grieved but he is withal triumphant. But George Webber going home again and Charles Gray going back to Clyde are transmitted intact—once the reader, who has never been to Clyde or Asheville, has made the shift. But this is not rotation, for it is a deliberate quest for the very thing rotation set out at any cost to avoid; the rider has turned his back upon the new and the remote and zone-crossing and now voyages into his own past in the search for himself. It is thus in the nature of a conversion. Unlike rotation, it is of two kinds, the aesthetic and the existential, which literature accordingly polarizes. The aesthetic repetition captures the savor of repetition without surrendering the self as a locus of experience and possibility.

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When Proust tastes the piece of cake or Captain Ryder finds himself in Brideshead, the incident may serve as an occasion for either kind: an excursion into the interesting, a savoring of the past as experience; or two, the passionate quest in which the incident serves as a thread in the labyrinth to be followed at any cost. This latter, however, however serious, cannot fail to be polarized by art, transmitting as the interesting. The question: what does it mean to stand before the house of one's childhood?, is thus received in two different ways, one, as an occasion for the connoisseur sampling of a rare emotion, the other literally and seriously: what does it really mean?

Repetition is the conversion of rotation. In rotation, Shane cannot stay. In repetition, Shane neither moves on nor stays, but turns back to carry the search into his own past (we need not consider here Kierkegaard's distinction that true religious repetition has nothing to do with travel but is "consciousness raised to the second power"—which I take to be equivalent to Marcel's secondary reflection). In *East of Eden* Steinbeck leaves the wheel of rotation, the wayward bus, and with a great flourish turns back to Salinas and the past. In a less cluttered repetition, *In Sicily,* Vittorini's "I", on the occasion of a letter from his father, leaves his life of everydayness in Milan where he is besieged by "abstract furies" and makes the pilgrimage back to Sicily. It is a very good repetition, or as Hemingway says in a somewhat purple introduction, it has rain in it. Like rotation, repetition offers itself as a deliverance from everydayness, yet it is, in a sense, the reverse of rotation. It is also a reversal of the objective-empirical. The latter world-view cannot get hold of it without radically perverting it. For example, the dust jacket of Vittorini's book says something, as I recall, about modern man's renewing his vital energies by rediscovering his roots, etc. This remark is no doubt true in a garrulous dust-jacket sense, yet it is the very stuff of the "abstract furies" which drove him from Milan in the first place. It is the objective-empirical counter-attack, the attempt to seize and render according to its own modes the existential trait—which it does only by re-reversing and alienating. (Even when a critic tries to stay clear of the abstract furies and writes of *The Adventures of Augie March* that it has the "juices of life in it," if it did have any juices, he is already drying them up.)

To say the least of it, then, whatever the ultimate metaphysical issues may be, the alienated man has in literature, as reader or writer, the

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three alternatives. He may simply affirm alienation for what it is and as the supreme intersubjective achievement of art set forth the truth of it: how it stands with both of us. Such is Joseph K.: Kafka's pointing at and naming alienation has already reversed it, healing the very wound it re-presents. For an intersubjective discovery of alienation is already its opposite. Rotation, on the other hand, is transmitted intact. Repetition is polarized, transmitting as the interesting, canceling as the existential. What is omitted is the serious character of the search. If it should happen that a real Charles Gray came to himself one morning in the full realization of the absurdity of his life in the surburbs and if on the occasion of a chance recollection of Clyde he has the strongest inkling that back there, not ahead, lies the thread in the labyrinth he has lost, and if, like Kierkegaard's young man, he developed a passion for recovering himself beside which his family, his work, science, art, were of no account whatsoever—such a passion would not transmit aesthetically as a passion but only as the interesting. This is to testify, not to an artistic deficiency of the writers of repetition, but to the validity of Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage—which can in no wise be self-transcending.

Marquand hit the motherlode when he applied the device of the Return to the promising vein of exurbanite alienation. The disenchantment of Charles Gray may never go beyond the genteel limits of irony, of the attractive emotion with which he suffers his wife's conversation (Aren't you going to wear your ruptured duck today?); it needn't go beyond this limit; indeed it should not—it is impossible to imagine Charles Gray in the full grip of anxiety, staring at his hand like Roquentin and shaking like a leaf at what he sees. It is altogether inappropriate that he should be. His little excursion into alienation, the pleasant return to Clyde, the mild disenchantment, stoically borne, which follows—is no more or less than what we bargained for. It would not do at all for Charles Gray to come to despair or to experience a religious conversion.

Whatever may be the ultimate decision—and one is tempted to contrast Marquand's Book-of-the-Month Club disenchantment with Kafka's Mitteleuropa alienation—the fact is that Charles Gray is the suburban counterpart of Joseph K. (and in my opinion, a not unworthy counterpart: the first hundred pages of *Point of No Return* are of a very high order). Charles Gray is a gentle wayfarer who is

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true to himself in the search for himself, and if he moderately despairs in the end and has recourse to a poetic Stoa, at least he knows and we know how it stands with him.

It is otherwise with *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit,* who is said to be plowing the same field but who actually exists one whole spiral beneath Marquand. Tom Rath is interesting as a regression from whatever authenticity Charles Gray achieves in his recognition of alienation and the deliverance therefrom, a regression which masquerades as rotation and is not even that. We come upon Tom Rath in the same promising wasteland as Charles Gray, the everydayness of the Manhattan-to-suburb axis. His way out is not repetition, however, but rotation and a remarkably shoddy variety of rotation. It is a device in which dishonesty is compounded at least twice—once in what the writer intends to do and again in what he does without intending to do—to issue in the standard rotative rhythm of the soap opera. Whatever Marquand's shortcomings, he knows what he can do and he does it very well. He shows a man in an inauthentic situation and he explores one interesting alternative to it. Tom Rath, on the other hand, embarks on a career of bad faith and counterfeit motivation in which righteous alternatives conceal their opposites.

Marquand's formula might be summed up as suburban alienation recognized, plus the way out of the Return, plus a gentle disillusionment stoically borne. And this is in fact what happens. Tom Rath's formula is: alienation recognized, the prevailing marketing orientation rejected, and a becoming one's authentic self by devoting oneself to family and the P.T.A.—an admirable turn of events, but this is not what really happens. Behind this façade an altogether different (and desperately inauthentic) bid for authenticity is made. At least two concealed reverses can be disentangled from this skein of bad faith.

The first reverse: overtly, the episode with Maria and the begetting of an illegitimate child is offered as a wartime lapse, bringing on a serious crisis in Rath's life which must be faced and surmounted, with the help of Judge Bernstein,[1] before the authentic life at home can be resumed.

1. In the character of Judge Bernstein, who is like Herman Wouk's Barney Greenwald, and in the character of the sympathetic Negro sergeant, the author shows his true affiliation as a compulsive liberal novelist of the Merle Miller school, which lays down the strict condition that no Negro or Jew may be admitted to fiction unless he has been previously canonized.

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Covertly and in fact, the wartime episode with Maria is offered as the one authentic moment, the high tide of Rath's life. It is clear enough that the Roman idyll with Maria sans pajamas and culminating in the scene in the ruined villa (!) is regarded as the highest moment to which mortal Rousseauvian man may attain. Postwar life with the family and community projects, far from being an advance into the good life as advertised, is unmistakably set forth as making the best of a sorry situation.

Charles Gray's most authentic moment is the Return: repetition; Tom Rath's is rotation, the coming upon the Real Thing among the ruins—a moment which needn't have been disguised since, for one thing, it has honorable literary forebears, as when Prince Andrey transcended everydayness and came to himself for the first time only when he lay wounded on the field of Borodino. This is a true existential reversal, the discovery of the pearl of great price at the very heart of the objective-empirical disaster. Yet even if Tom Rath's rotation with Maria had been offered at its face value, it would not have rung true. For Tom's adventure is not, in fact, a rotation but is a desperate impersonation masquerading as rotation.

The second reverse: overtly the adventure with Maria is offered as rotation, an untrammeled exploration of *la solitude à deux* amid the smoking ruins of the *ens soir*.

Covertly and in fact, Tom Rath is taking refuge in the standard rotation of the soap opera, the acceptable rhythm of the Wellsian-Huxleyan-Nathanian romance of love among the ruins. His happiness with Maria as they lie in the ruined villa warmed by the burning piano, far from being a free exploration, is in reality a conforming to the most ritualistic of gestures: that which is thought to be proper and fitting for a sexual adventure. The motto of Tom's happiness is "Now I am really living," which does not mean now I am truly myself but rather, now at last I am doing the acceptable-thing-which-an-American-officer-in-Europe-is-supposed-to-do. He has at last achieved a successful impersonation, the role-taking of the American-at-war. It would have been more interesting if Rath's adventure could have been explored as a repetition, a re-experiencing of what his father had done with the Mademoiselle from Armentières. As it is, finding himself in the situation of alienation, the familiar I estranged from the It, Tom Rath, instead of becoming a self, a free individual, solves

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the dilemma by a dismal impersonation, a fading into the furniture of the It.

Tom Rath's dream is the sexual dream of the commuter, the longing for a Pepper Young rotation which can only come about through the agency of war or amnesia. The inhibition of the sexual longing of the commuter occurs far below the level of sin. It is not the scruple of sin which deters the commuter from sexual rotation but the implicit threat to his self-system of defenses against anxiety. What if he is turned down? What if he is premature in his performance? (What if Destry misses?) In Harry Stack Sullivan's words, the mark of success in the culture is how much one can do to another's genitals without risking one's self-esteem unduly. But when the Bomb falls, the risk is at a minimum. When the vines sprout in Madison Avenue and Radio City lies greening like an Incan temple in the jungle, and when Maria develops amnesia, there is hardly any risk at all.

OF ISAAC ROSENFELD

I never knew him. We hailed, here or there,
and friendly words about each other's bad
& halfway works we mouthed, and clowned. I had
briefings on him, years, over the waters. Fair
showed yet his promise; he enjoyed despair,
did wrong, set living people roaring or sad,
loved was, empty months mastered, sore made & glad
a wife, and liked children—from across, not down;
and so they loved him back. Only they said
'He ought to be a father, not a child'—
his own child too said so. I have to glare
into a room where, half-through, he crampt dead,
where all his lovers, seeking his cry, drown,
and solo I reel in a word dispelled.

John Berryman

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Arthur A. Cohen

RELIGION AS A SECULAR IDEOLOGY

Ideologies are always dangerous. The derisive sense in which the term is used suggests that ideology is harmful, if not to the social weal, then surely to the intellectual responsibility of its proponents. Ideologies, as the term and its usage at times suggest, are doctrinal fixations, the freezing of ideas into a rigid pattern of thought. Obviously one must distinguish, at the outset, between true and false ideologies, though their truth or falsity does not necessarily reflect the essential virtue or nobility of their content. More often their truth or falsity describes their utility and function. It would not be argued that political ideologies, as ideologies, are true if they do not work, that is, if they are unable to gain their ultimate objective, which is power. This is not to say that political *philosophies,* in contrast to ideologies, are true only insofar as they can be brought to realization. It would be foolish to deny the essential wisdom of Plato's *Republic.* But the *Republic* is an image of an ideal political order. When Plato sought to define what could legitimately be expected of the Greek *polis* he composed the *Laws.* This phenomenon has been repeated often in the history of thought. It is rare that the same thinker has had the courage and humility to write two works: one for the sake of man's perfection, the other to acknowledge the limitation of man's estate. It has more frequently occurred that the ideologue imagined himself a philosopher, witness Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte; or the philosopher has seen himself as a man of affairs, as is the case with the English Utilitarians.

Karl Marx is perhaps the rarest combination of philosopher and ideologue: the London metaphysician speculating on the indubitable principles of history and human freedom and bondage. The ideologue in Marx lies in his illusion that the philosophic vision will be accom-

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plished, that the means are at hand, that history awaits the concretization of the vision. The ideologue's error is always that he imagines the vision will be realized exactly as he dreams it. Marx was satisfied with his *Republic*. It was not necessary for him to write a *Laws,* only a manual of political action.

In our day, at this moment, our world is in reaction to the visionary ideology of Marxism. Let us leave aside the menacing presence of Soviet Communism. The differences between Marxism and Communism have been endlessly charted. Communism is not the ideology, it is the penultimate achievement of its ends. One has ideology only where the mind functions among alternatives, constantly closing out the opposition, endlessly proving the same truths. Communism is an ideology only in those countries where Communism has not triumphed, where Communism must still argue, make converts, and openly defend itself. At least an ideology involves thought. Unless one seriously believes that there is thought, authentic dialectic in Russia today, one must discountenance talk of Soviet ideology. There is policy and the dialectic of policy, but discussion of theory and ends is over. Thought and ideology have been depassed.

If the United States is not to end in a comparable state of *depassement,* we must examine the trends of ideology that are forming in our midst at present. It is so often argued that if we wish to combat Communism we must talk up the truths of democracy, announce our domestic vision with repetitive force and concision. It is equally argued that those attendant visions of the democratic society, God and nation, must be reaffirmed. It is this which I wish to challenge. I, for one, do not believe that any statement of the American message ought to be made as long as we continue to refer to it by such terms as *message, vision, heritage,* or *ancestry.* Such terms precipitate the Arctic flow of ideology. The effort to define the American ideology, to fix it for our time, to make use of it as a criterion of discriminating the docile sheep from the wolves, is dangerous and inimical to our freedom.

The complex factors contributing to the formation of what we shall term, *faute de mieux,* the "American ideology" cannot be satisfactorily presented here. We can explore, however, the central sources of the ideology, the abundant larder from which the nutriment of ideology is being drawn.

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There is little doubt that a "religious revival" is on. We must distinguish between the role of popular religion and the appropriation of religious concept and tradition which intellectuals have made for some years now. I do not disclaim the by and large honest use which many intellectuals have made of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish tradition in the restatement of their position. Being often literary men, they are victims of ideology in its authentic usage; for generally they are theologically unskilled, applying dogmatic formulations in contexts where they are improperly employed and improperly understood. We hope that being intellectuals they can profit by correction, that they are susceptible to the gentle reproof of reason and history. Popular ideology is different. The intellectual is neither employed nor wanted. He is not asked to clarify terms, to form proper ideological usage. Ideology forms itself to suit different ends—not in answer to Kant's fourth question: "What can Man hope?" but in answer to society's desperate question: "What can we do *now?*"

There can be little doubt that religious leaders are not as unwilling as perhaps they should be to receive and publicize the persistent attention, flattery, and compliment paid their essential doctrine by administrators of higher education and government. The atmosphere in the '50s is vastly different from what it was in the '30s. During the '30s, theology was not respectable and religious vocations were at an ebb. Though neo-orthodoxy was forming in Europe, Brunner and Barth having revived the terms of theological debate, the situation in the United States was different. The religious communities of this country were either compelled by the Depression and social unrest into passionate defense of their authentic concern for society, or else were splintered off by the terms operative in public debate: the reactionaries who concerned themselves with man's ultimate estate and regeneration and the radicals who wanted God's grace here and now. This was the period when Roman Catholic theologians in the United States turned their attention to the problems of labor and social welfare (not to be sure at the compromise of theological consistency), both from the left and right—for Bishop Sheil and Father Coughlin were equally phenomena of the '30s; when Protestant ministers preached more of the social gospel than ever before; when the Rabbinate was taking the prophetic message out of

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the context of God's redemption and making it the primary undertaking of the Jewish religion.

The concern for man's temporal estate is certainly not unbecoming to religion or theology. What is clear, however, was that in the '30s religion was on the run, scoffed at, derided, and ignored. The quality of the ministry was not the highest; the attendance of the laity was at its lowest. Bright people were either on the left or entrenching themselves on the right. Religion was neither popular nor unpopular in the late '20s, '30s, or early '40s. It was merely passed by as a great waste of time, irrelevant to the issues of the day.

Serious theologians did not ignore, however, the criticism of the age implicit in the general public indifference to religion. Paul Tillich, in his now reissued *The Religious Situation,* took note of the immense relevance of the criticism of Christianity being leveled by the newer movements in European politics, art, and literature. Reinhold Niebuhr moved from a position of extraordinary, but justified, ambivalence about the relevance of the Christian position to the social order, to something like a clear doctrine of the relation of love and justice to human events. Mordecai Kaplan, though not a systematic thinker, trained a whole generation of rabbis to make some peace between their religious tradition and the needs of the twentieth-century American Jew. If anything, the indifference to religion caused serious religious people to think. Thus religion was compelled, both by conviction and vested interest, to become reflective.

There is no question but that the great and profound moments of religious expression come out of periods of most intense anguish, whether the anguish be response to the active opposition of the world or the inner conviction of the world's indifference to God. The martyrologies of those who were slain during the Hadrianic persecutions of the Jews; the Acts of the Martyrs that precede the accession of Constantine to the Church; the reports of Christian missionaries and sundry pilgrims—these together with the inner anguish of St. Francis, St. John of the Cross, Pascal, the Baal Shem and others witness, not only to the security and pride of the faithful, but to their essential distress, their fundamental *déracinement.* The religious spirit is most profound when it is thrown into the state of uprootedness and estrangement. This is not to say that such estrangement is without joy or love; nor need such estrangement be pathological to be au-

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thentic. It is merely to say that religion is never at its best when it is self-satisfied, accepted, and unthreatened.

At the present time religion in America has become most comfortable and satisfied. It is clutched to the breast of every political leader; bally-hooed by most educators; praised by billboards and handbills; promoted by public relations; and serviced by advertising agencies. There are two major dangers consequent to the popularity of religion: it is both destructive of the democratic society and destructive of religion.

I do not believe that any successful theological argument has been presented to demonstrate the necessary compatibility of Christianity or Judaism and democracy. Horace Kallen, in a lamentably hortatory book, *Secularism as the Will of God,* is closer to the truth, for it is his contention that democracy, if it must have religion, must have one that is secular. Though a contradiction in terms, his contention is valid. Democracy can have no religion, can encourage none, can make peace with none. Though it must work out the problem of freedom and toleration, it is fundamentally indifferent, wherever it has been rationally argued, to dogmatic religious doctrine and practice. It is nonsense to quote Jefferson endlessly on religion. Jefferson was a Deist. As such, his God had little relation to the God of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Deism was, in origin, a consequence of the radical dualism of Descartes and Spinoza. The God of the Deist is as uninterested in me and my personal destiny as he can be. He is classically seen as the great clockmaker who starts the mechanism and retires to admire its intricacy. It is even doubtful if he cares sufficiently to fix it should it break down. Assuredly the God of Jefferson was a reasonable God, but not one conceived to elicit more from the faithful than compliments on his calm and rationality. He was not a God who saves. It is bad history and worse rhetoric to quote the Founding Father in an effort to solidify the continuity of national tradition, democratic ancestry, and traditional religion.

Democracy is concerned that religion should be permitted, but not encouraged, by the State. The individual, before the law, must appear as though he is without religion. The laws of the courts do not vary from religion to religion. They may accommodate belief where it does not overturn the law, but they must not sanction or recommend it; permit it to endure, but not encourage its growth. Even where the government allows Jehovah's Witnesses to commit

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the "questionable" act of refusing allegiance to the flag, or allows conscientious objectors to serve in noncombative roles in wartime, the motivation is not solicitude or concern for religion but an extension of the principle of no doctrine. It is fortunate that, by and large, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Jews are not opposed to all wars, and that the citizenry is not so eschatological as to deny the privileges of the State to exact minimal obedience. It is clear that traditionally the last thing the State should do is make religion a promotional partner of public policy.

The democratic society, if it does not erect Comtean temples of reason (which might at least be compatible), must be indifferent to religion. The best that it can do is protect pluralism; that is, the multiplicity of absolute claims, caring for none, while protecting all.

Pluralism in its political and social form is, of course, an impossible doctrine. On grounds of reason it is shot through with inconsistency. Presumably what one calls truth is not the fractured, splintered, disorganized amalgam that pluralism maintains. As a position pluralism in religion is possible only for the a-religious. The positively anti-religious is committed, and cannot countenance the acceptance of even a multiplicity of contradictory doctrines of transcendence. The believer, whatever he may be, is either an indifferent believer or a timorous believer if he accepts pluralism as theologically viable doctrine. Only to the a-religious, who are not interested and do not wish to be troubled, is pluralism a satisfactory solution, for it guarantees their right to indifference. In medieval Catholic Europe or Calvinist Switzerland indifference was as subject to punishment as objective heresy. In our age pluralism is therefore expedient. It is pragmatically adequate. It does not alter, to any significant extent, the ultimate claim of Roman Catholics to represent the one Apostolic Church, or deter Protestants from maintaining the absolute validity of the principle of independent religious conscience, or Jews from regarding Catholicism and Protestantism (and all other religions for that matter) as, at best, "imitating creeds."

The virtue of democracy is that it has no theory of democracy. It has no orthodoxy for which there is a comparable heresy. It possesses a *praxis,* an order of governing. It has no credal affirmations. Its oath of allegiance is fundamentally negative but indubitably significant: to obey the law and defend the country. These are ulti-

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mately philosophic commitments (presumably the anarchist will have some difficulty with any oath of allegiance); yet for the order of the day they are minimal, evident, and easily acceptable principles of behavior requiring no submission to a comprehensive doctrine. The Bill of Rights, to the extent that it expresses a theory at all, exposes a doctrine of no preference and no theories. It commits itself to the protection of all rights, irrespective of their substantive character.

What occurs at the present time, however, is the effort to incorporate positive religious doctrine into the order of democratic commitment, to put democracy on the side of the angels, to advance the national cause as though the Kingdom of God and foreign policy, for example, were part of a divine-human mutual-aid program. Viewed narrowly, this is a dangerous importation of sectarian conviction into the secular order. Our society is and could well remain secular. Secular, deriving as it does from the Latin *saecula,* means nothing more than the nonholy, the unsanctified. It is not my intention to argue that religious believers should not seek, by their own witness and life, to redeem the *saecula* in their world, to make the unholy holy. This is an authentic expression of the religious vocation. It is unhealthy when the essentially secular encourages the religious to take it over, begs that it be buttressed and commended by the religious order. The secular does not essentially strive against the religious. Religion has turned the secular from the domain of neutrality into the ferocious opponent of religion, and so-called secularists have taken up the challenge. The secular is, however, the nonreligious, that is to say, that portion of the world not yet altered by religion. In the case of the democratic society the secular is most authentic when it is neutral, when it is unmoved by religious appeals for its capitulation.

A series of editorials this past year in *Commonweal,* the nation's leading lay Catholic weekly, argues most convincingly against the prevailing view, voiced often in the religious press, that to be a good Catholic, Protestant, or Jew is *ipso facto* to be a good American. *Commonweal* indicates that such a conclusion follows neither logically nor historically. It contends correctly that such may be a fortuitous consequence, for the religious man should be a good man and by being a good man, that is, "a friend of God and of one's neighbor," he may incidentally be a good citizen—but a patriot, a good American—from such a conclusion *Commonweal* rightly demurs. Religion

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should, it claims, make a man responsible, peaceful, and cooperative; but to make him a patriot—with all its terrestrial commitment and implication of automatic loyalty—is neither the spirit nor end of religion.

If religious leaders publicly combated the tendency on the part of official leadership to make use of divine sanction, churchgoing, and religious affiliation as an adjunct of public relations, such a tendency might be less pronounced. Unfortunately it is true, as Will Herberg points out in his recent book *Protestant-Catholic-Jew,* that an atheist could not be elected at the present time to office if he announced, as did Robert Ingersoll or Clarence Darrow, that he was an unbeliever, or, for that matter, unchurched. As Herberg notes, only one of 95 Senators in the Eighty-third Congress reported no religious affiliation; and all others, whatever their vagueness, claimed some credal identification.[1] Atheism, even skepticism, is not good public relations—it is, moreover, positively dangerous if one happens to be running for public office or working in the public school system.

What emerges is a rather bleak picture of religion compromising itself for the sake of security and public policy hedging its own tradition of indifference to religious commitment in order to insure religious support under the ever-widening umbrella of the American way of life.

Does this pattern of the evolving national religion imply the existence of an ideology? If we mean by ideology the application of coherent theory to popular activity, the transformation of doctrine into viable terms of conduct, the identification of religion and Americanism is not ideology. Ideology involving a doctrine of man and history is not at the moment operative on the American scene. This is both good and bad. Because the American ideology is vague, it is fluid and malleable. It may be changed and reformed. It allows for growth and the discharge of waste. It is in this sense that American democracy is fortunate to have no *docta,* only a *praxis.* It is bad and dangerous because being fluid, being dependent upon the popular will and the popular mind, easy solutions become more easily en-

1. Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew.* New York: Doubleday & Co., 1955. Ref. *Information Service,* December 27, 1952.

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trenched. It is infinitely harder to dislocate irrational prejudice than it is to remove error for which one claims reasonable justification. There is no public reasoning and no public discussion of the commonly used epithet "Godless" or "God-fearing." These are salivary terms, which like Pavlov's bell produce an anticipated response. Being unreflective terms they are, as all habit, most difficult to discard. The ideology of the moment is dangerous because the motive of the ideology is not expressed, perhaps not even recognized. This motive, the buttress of the ideology, is, unfortunately, fear.

No society within our recent experience exhibits greater prosperity, greater success, and greater terror than our own. The terror need not be documented in detail. One has only to consider our current literature, the incredible rise of sexual and psychic disorder, the persistent threat of war and catastrophe to find adequate statement and exhibition of the fear that subsumes the national psyche.

Unfortunately, the religious are as terrified as the rest. They wish the protection of the national authority as profoundly as the national authority wishes the sponsorship of divine sanction. The irony is that at this moment religion should be, as its vocation commends, most profoundly courageous and most unterrified—for authentic religion should not fear at the moment of fear, should not submit when the nation capitulates in spirit. To the extent that the prophetic position survives in the West, it is precisely at the moment of national calamity that the prophet rebukes the people. When does Amos, Jeremiah, or Isaiah speak—not at moments of religious intensity and fulfillment, but during the days of complacency and the days of terror. The religious position has classically discerned terror within complacency, and despair at the table of the prosperous. Precisely *now* when religion should be most trenchant and unrelenting it is officially most supine and conforming. At this moment when the churches should be reasserting their unique claims they are pooling their resources; when they should be confronting man with the exactitudes of judgment they are abnegating their independence. The spurious popularity of religion cannot but make for its own debilitation. It may one day find that it cannot return as easily to its authentic doctrine, which is precisely to disconcert man, to cause him to fear and to love profoundly.

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At this moment, on the contrary, if recent statistics[2] are believable, 96 or 97 per cent of the American people declare themselves to believe in God; 75 per cent regard themselves as church members; 90 per cent pray; varying but enormously high numbers of people believe in Biblical inspiration, immortality, heaven and hell. At the same time as they believe in such classic credal doctrines, a scant 5 per cent fear, much less anticipate, damnation; and 80 per cent, according to one survey, were more concerned with being comfortable here and now than occupying themselves with their ultimate estate. Ninety-one percent felt most sincerely that they were trying to lead the good life; 78 per cent considered that they had measured up to their own standards of virtue; and 50 per cent believed that they were observing the Golden Rule constantly and without fail.

American religiosity is paradoxically smug and self-assured. If there is such pervasive and abundant self-congratulation, can the root of the problem be fear? The signs of fear need not be chiliastic passion, as in first-century Asia Minor, or, as in sixteenth-century Europe, the preoccupation with hell, damnation, and evil. The problem of personal evil and judgment is not serious at the moment. What exists is radical self-deception; the fear is more terrifying for being vague, nameless, and imprecise. With war and atomic destruction constantly threatening from without and incredible complexity, meaningless pressure, and anxiety compelling our society from within, the average American sees himself trapped in an unreleased pressure cooker. Fear, the pervasive quality of which is its vagueness, is more devastating and critical, being too complex for the single man to summarize. It is for this reason that the simplistic vocabulary of man's limitation before transcendence, man's original fall, man's departure from grace are hollow-sounding and unreal, whatever their theological validity. The contemporary American does not see *himself* fallen from anything, for he does not evaluate himself *individually*. His individuation is practically meaningless, for he is absorbed into so many group and class situations that he can find out who he is only by counting up his tags of membership. Not the

2. All of the statistics quoted here and subsequently appear in Herberg's work, *op.cit.* They are drawn primarily from surveys conducted by the *Catholic Digest* during 1952-53 and by *Public Opinion News Service* (Gallup Poll) during 1954. The figures, if anything, would probably be steady or even slightly higher today.

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formed man but the additive man dominates the scene. But at the same time, as American prosperity and success penetrate more and more of our life and individual Americans exhaust themselves in its pursuit, some occasionally stop and observe that their effort is ludicrous and self-destructive. The fear is man's helplessness. The confusion is enormous and self-perpetuating.

It is actually beside the point to diagnose the condition which has produced the modern anguish. What has resulted is the frenetic quest for security, for conservation, for divine-human cooperation in the task of governing and administering our society. What has emerged is the common religion of "Americanism" which all denominations endorse and support as their meeting-ground. The disastrous effect of this amalgam, however, is expressed by the last statistic I will offer. Fifty-four per cent of Americans claiming religious commitment believed that religion should stay in the churches, that it had nothing to do with political or business conduct. It is presumed that Americans are not saying that there should be no morality in public life. No one could support such a conclusion. Obviously there must be something which functions in lieu of established religion in the public domain. The reasonable conclusion is that public morality is somehow extrapolated from that vagueness called the "American sense of fair play," "American sportsmanship"; in effect, the virtues and morality that Americanism presumably comports. This Americanism is the common religion that all may share and agree upon. It need not be demonstrated that this is neither a religion nor a morality but an ideology. It is the most dangerous kind of ideology, for it is fabricated out of mutually inconsistent realities: the secular and neutral and the religious dogmatic—an ideology of misappropriated concepts which is dangerous because it wants the best mutually exclusive worlds. Democracy, disguised as Americanism, cannot adapt the exclusive, radical, and dogmatic character of religion to its own neutrality and remain independent. Catholics, Protestants and Jews cannot put aside their absolute claims in order to fashion some hybrid common denominator uniting them in the basically neutral practice of democratic government. Their effort compromises both democracy and religious authenticity.

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POEMS

VALUES IN USE*

I attended school and I liked the place—
grass and little locust-leaf shadows like lace.

Writing was discussed. They said, "We create
values in the process of living, daren't await

their historic progress." Be abstract
and you'll wish you'd been specific; it's a fact.

What was I studying? Values in use
"judged on their own ground." Am I still abstruse?

Walking along, a student said offhand,
" 'Relevant' and 'plausible' were words I understand."

A pleasing statement, anonymous friend.
Certainly the means must not defeat the end.

Marianne Moore

* The two first quoted phrases are taken from a rousing address that Philip Rahv gave on July 27, 1956 in Alston Burr Hall, Cambridge.—M. M.

OUT OF CHAOS

What flood traverses me which on my skin
Is struck by the white shudder of traveling wind?
Waves mold me in the turmoil of their spray,
Breezes sweep my beardless face of every
Fold. Glacial shreds of twisting mists
Swaddle my loins. What weight still holds me half

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Unfurled? And what decree in silence made
Commands the milky swirls and twirling dark
To cradle my confusion with soft hands
Until the piercing arrow in me vibrates
Like a word? Oh God! My eyes awaken
To ungoverned chaos which Thy hand
No longer hides beneath its patient shade.

While wails exacerbate beneath Thy gaze
Which, veiled, scarce hides Thy endless unconcern,
Beyond, I glimpse the monstrous strife of waves
And winds as they unroll. I feel my being
Taper, youthful reason melt like wax
Before its light. My gaze which spirals spray
Suspended, separates myself from it.
Fear entrenches me within myself
Against life's waves where many eager passions,
Ill-contained, exclaim in secrecy.
I lie upon the beach, undone, abandoned
By the ebbing tide, a seashell closed
Upon its useless jewel.

My lashes, near the pool which is my eye,
Are fragile reveries of reeds aligned,
Whose fine reflection filters my surprise.
This world so new is empty to the edge
And gapes at Thy immense Hegira. Am I
Born to see Thy absence, not to live?
Shall I be ever torn by this regret
Of having come from thee one day, a lifeless
Fish, whose yawning mouth and rounded eyes
Drift over seas beneath the sky?

Float, flag of mists. Roll, air insensitive.
Skies, skim this earth extended like the Book
In anarchy, where, as I scan, I see
But snatches of illuminations. Pages,

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Turn, illegible. Sing, leafy scenery
Of trees that trample swamps. Mountains in cloud,
Expose your crystal tips to the fire of a sun
That turns without repose. Immobile blue
(A patch is my ceiling), hide from God all-powerful
My fault in being born.

I stand erect and cymbals crash in a forest
Of copper and tin. An heroic flourish of horns
Blown by the ancient woods bristling with pikes,
Bows and slings, acclaims my step. Trumpets
Of muted silver answer the wrought-iron fifes
And beat a new measure on soil now firm.
Yonder the raging pent-up waves keep step
Striking the ramparts of cliffs along the shore.
What do these savage incantations ask
Of me, with the tap of tom-toms applauding
Like the diffused perfume of rose?

Perched like a glossy crow on polished blue,
The bird of solar flame surveys a zenith
Whose height it plans to scale. The cuckoo answers
Echoes. Across the shadow of the wolf, ants
Creep, for whom the sound of germinating
Wheat is subterranean thunder. Tired
Of prehistoric labors, seas spread out
On shores and with their mirror, gnawed by foam,
Stare at the skies possessed of dragon flies.
The silver clusters of fish circle the pond
Silent through sheets of willow and grass. Why hast
Thou made me like a world within a world
Where bison shake the virgin soil?

In winds that summon me I hear Thy voice,
Am called by the unfurling of the sky.
The sea inscribes me on her waves. The depths
Of woods mingle with murmur of leaves my name.
The creeping briar restrains my feet which bleed.

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The green woodpecker strikes the hollow tree,
Says "Adam." The plunging frog in pools cries "Man."
And if I fail to note the bluet's gaze,
It is amazed. I rush to Thy world, fired by
Thy frenzy, straight as the stone drops to the well.
How beautiful the world is for my fall!

Jean Grosjean

(*Translated from the French by Blanche Adelle Price*)

INVENTED A PERSON

Invented a person named I:
Out of use and disuse
And the antique child who watched the new moon in the sky,
And a foot in the antique grave,
Out of faces cast off by mirrors eyeless under light,
Out of love and excuse,

In need, on the screen of a dream:
The target of blow, the chosen of healing and love,
A marvel of fate!
Most trapped, like the wind in a trap
Sweeping forward and out, most curbed like the sea
Storming breakwater walls to the bay, like a bird that must
break for the sky
Through all space winging straight

Longed to be:
Invented a person named I
With a place of its own
A certain thing to be done,
And in fear for that one.

Lenore G. Marshall

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COMMUNISM NOW: THREE VIEWS

ISAAC DEUTSCHER

"Is de-Stalinization a sign of a liberal trend in Soviet society or is it only a temporary expedient?" This is probably the question most frequently debated by the intelligentsia nowadays. I shall perhaps be forgiven for saying that behind the mere formulation of the question one can feel an extraordinary remoteness from the realities of the issue. The view that de-Stalinization is only a "temporary expedient" or a slick maneuver, carried out by a few men in the Kremlin in the course of a narrow personal struggle for power, had perhaps a semblance of plausibility in the year 1953 or 1954, before the full force of the reaction against Stalinism had become apparent. In 1956 this view is patently anachronistic and untenable. The break with Stalinism is now felt in every aspect of Soviet activity and thought: in domestic and foreign policies, in education, in philosophical writing, in historical research, and indeed, in the whole atmosphere of Soviet life. The scale and range of the changes taking place indicate that what we are witnessing is a many-sided, organic, and at times convulsive, upheaval in the existence of a huge segment of humanity.

I shall not dwell here on such recent events as the Twentieth Congress and Khrushchev's speech, the importance of which is obvious. What these and similar events show is that even if Stalin's successors had originally been guided by mere tactical considerations the effects of their moves have by far transcended all tactics. The autocratic system of government, bequeathed by Stalin, is shattered. The backbone of the M.V.D., the political police, is broken. The *univers concentrationnaire* is dissolving. Stalinist monolithic uniformity is slowly, painfully, yet unmistakably beginning to give way to a certain diversity of outlook. If the "liberal trend" is defined as a radical lessening of governmental coercion and a striving for gov-

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ernment by consent then this trend has been obviously and even conspicuously at work in Soviet society.

More important perhaps than the political trend is, to my mind, its social undercurrent, which Western commentators and experts have so far hardly noticed. After thirty years of the most ruthless and savage suppression by Stalinism, egalitarian aspirations are coming back into their own, regaining strength, and even exercising a direct influence on official policy. Lack of space does not allow me to summarize here, let alone to analyze, recent developments in Soviet labor and wages policy. Their cumulative effect has been to reduce the grotesque inequalities of the Stalin era. Stakhanovism, in which those inequalities were epitomized, has been given a quiet burial. The "progressive piece rate" (a method of payment under which a worker producing above his norm earns rates rising in ever higher progression with the additional output) has been declared to be obsolete in most cases and socially harmful. (In Stalin's days the "progressive piece rate" was sacrosanct!) The new wage system which is now being worked out is to be based on the time-wage rather than on the piece-wage, which Marx had described as a typically capitalist form of payment and which Stalin proclaimed as the quintessence of a socialist system of incentives. Twenty years ago Trotsky described, in *The Revolution Betrayed* and other writings, the crucial role of the piece wage in the Stalinist anti-egalitarian policy. Trotsky's argument has since been vulgarized and repeated ad nauseam by all leftish and many not so leftish critics of Stalinism. It is therefore strange that the same critics have failed to notice that Stalin's policy is being reversed in this vital point, too. Similarly, anti-Stalinists have invariably, and rightly, pointed to the introduction, in the '30s, for fees for secondary and higher education as a measure promoting social inequality—some have even seen in it the decisive act of a social "counter-revolution" in the U.S.S.R. It is therefore at least illogical on their part not to recognize that with the abolition of *all* fees for education Stalin's successors have struck a momentous blow against inequality. (No nation in the West, not even the wealthiest, as yet provides its citizens with free education in all grades!)

De-Stalinization and "liberalization" would indeed be frauds if they were confined merely to politics, and if they were not backed

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by a resurgent socialist egalitarianism. Freedom in the U.S.S.R. shrank and was suppressed as inequality grew; it can grow again only if inequality shrinks. To be sure, Soviet society is, and will remain for some time, highly stratified. Privileges and social differences which have grown up over the lifetime of a generation are not going to vanish and cannot vanish all at once. The struggle against inequality is likely to be hard and long. But what is for the time being of the greatest significance is that after so long a pause that struggle has begun anew, and that the egalitarian trend has already made—with surprising ease!—its first, and rather impressive conquests. This fact outweighs in importance volumes of abstract political theorizing about the "impossibility of reform in a totalitarian system."

It goes without saying that three decades of totalitarianism press heavily upon the present situation. The social background in which Stalinism was rooted has been greatly but not completely transformed. De-Stalinization proceeds in dialectical contradictions. The rule of the single Leader has been repudiated; but not the rule of the single faction (let alone of the single party), out of which Stalin's autocracy had sprung. The principle of the infallibility of the party leadership has been abandoned; but party members and nonparty men alike are still denied the freedom to criticize and remove the fallible leaders. The ruling men proclaim the need for free and open controversy within a Marxist framework of thought; yet as such controversy develops they are seized with fright and not averse to cutting it short by administrative order. (This has happened in the important debate between the "consumptionist" and "productionist" schools of thought.) On the other hand, the controversies over the conduct of Soviet affairs in the last war and over the restitution of truthful history writing, controversies which have a close bearing upon present and future policies, are still in progress. The revulsion against Stalinist discipline and mental uniformity is universal and irrepressible; but it has not been positive enough and inspired by sufficiently great and clear ideas to be able to impart to society a real and fruitful diversity of outlook and to make society politically articulate. The principles and practices of the Stalinist theocracy are deeply discredited; but its mental habits again and again assert themselves. The cult of Stalin is dead; but the cult of Lenin,

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however more rational in both content and form, continues to obscure political thought.

It is enough to list these contradictions—and there are many more—to demonstrate once again not the spuriousness, as some think, but precisely the reality of the whole process. Without such contradictions de-Stalinization would have been sheer make-believe, stage-effect and hocus-pocus, or the lifeless concoction of an obtuse "political scientist." With them, it is what it is—an authentic historic development.

Stalinism represented an amalgamation of Marxism with the semi-barbarous and quite barbarous traditions and the primitive magic of an essentially pre-industrial, *i.e.,* not merely pre-socialist but pre-bourgeois, society. Yet it was under Stalinism that Russia rose to the position of the world's second industrial power. By fostering Russia's industrialization and modernization Stalinism had with its own hands uprooted itself and prepared its "withering away." But here again the complex dialectics of the situation mock at the logical abstractions and simplifications of the "political philosopher" and moralist. It is, broadly speaking, the rapid development of its productive forces that both enables and compels Soviet society to free itself from the shackles of Stalinism. But it is also the relative underdevelopment of the same productive forces that keeps the heavy residuum of Stalinism in being.

A nation, the urban population of which has grown by as many as fifty-five to sixty million people in only thirty years, the annual steel output of which has risen from five to fifty million tons in the same time, and the industrial apparatus of which has successfully coped with the problems of nuclear technology well ahead of all the old industrial nations of Europe—such a nation can no longer be ruled by a "rising Sun" and a "Father of the People" and held in awe by the whole set of Stalinist totems and taboos which belonged essentially to a much earlier and lower phase of civilization. With public ownership of the means of production firmly established, with the consolidation and expansion of planned economy, and—last but not least—with the traditions of a socialist revolution alive in the minds of its people, the Soviet Union breaks with Stalinism in order to resume its advance toward equality and socialist democracy.

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This advance, however, finds an immediate obstruction in the relative inadequacy of the Soviet productive forces, which have not been developed sufficiently or have been developed too one-sidedly to secure for the bulk of the people a standard of living much higher than at present, a standard of living at which human relations could cease to be a constant competition and struggle of all against all and could become permeated by the spirit of socialist cooperation and association. The relative scarcity of consumer goods (especially of housing!) is the decisive *objective* factor which sets limits to egalitarian and democratic reform.

That scarcity should not be viewed merely in the context of the domestic economic situation of the U.S.S.R. It must be seen against the background of the world situation which imposes upon the U.S.S.R. an economic and power-political race with the United States and up to a point compels the Soviet rulers to press on with the development of heavy industry at the immediate expense of consumer interests. The needs of the industrialization of China and partly of Eastern Europe, too, have the same effect. The Soviet worker has begun to "finance" in all earnestness the industrialization of the underdeveloped Communist countries; and he "finances" it out of the resources which might otherwise have been used to raise his own standard of living. This, incidentally, is another usually overlooked yet extremely important aspect of de-Stalinization. (Stalin, at least in the first postwar years, compelled other Communist countries to "finance" Russia's economic recovery!) Here indeed two aspects of de-Stalinization—Russian domestic reform and reform in Russia's relationship with the entire Soviet bloc—can be seen in actual conflict with each other. (The fact that the Soviet worker "finances" at his own immediate expense the industrialization of underdeveloped Communist countries is, of course, an historic innovation of the greatest possible consequence. It contrasts sharply with the practice of imperialism which has secured surplus profits to capitalists but has also raised the standards of living of the workers of imperialist nations at the expense of colonial subjects. An exactly opposite development is taking place within the Soviet bloc. This explains perhaps why Western talk about Point Four programs has become the laughing stock of Asia. However, Russia's new commitments toward other Communist countries act also as a brake on the reformist trend inside Russia.)

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The contradictory character of the *subjective,* human and psychological, factors of de-Stalinization is not less striking. The force of inertia which keeps alive Stalinist habits of action and thought must not be underrated even after the check it has received since the Twentieth Congress. It has certainly not spent itself. A privileged minority is bound to defend its privileges. A bureaucracy accustomed to rule in the absolutist manner exerts itself to preserve its preponderance. The labor aristocracy, or a section of it, may not favor policies which narrow the social gap between that "aristocracy" and the mass of workers. Yet the resistance of all these groups to the new policies has so far proved to be weaker, far weaker, than might have been expected. The worst crucial contradiction lies in the character of the chief agents of de-Stalinization who are none other than the former guardians of Stalinist orthodoxy. (How much ink my critics, especially in the U.S.A., have spilled to declare me an "incurable wishful thinker," or even a "Stalinist apologist," when three years before Khrushchev's secret speech I forecast this paradoxical development!)

The paradox is not accidental. De-Stalinization has become a social necessity; and necessity works through such human material as it finds available. Had any of the old Bolshevik Oppositions—Trotskyist, Zinovievist, and Bukharinist—survived till this day, Messrs. Khrushchev, Bulganin, Voroshilov and Co. would surely have long since been removed from power and influence, and anti-Stalinists would have carried out the de-Stalinization wholeheartedly, consistently, rationally, and with complete frankness. But the old Oppositions have been totally exterminated, and new ones could not form themselves and grow under Stalin's rule. The job which it should have been the historic right and privilege of authentic anti-Stalinists to tackle has thus fallen to the Stalinists themselves, who cannot tackle it otherwise than halfheartedly and hypocritically. They have to undo much of their life's work in such a way as not to bring about their own undoing. Circumstances have forced Malenkov and Khrushchev to act *up to a point* as the executors of Trotsky's political testament. The wonder is not that they act these roles awkardly, badly, and even monstrously badly, but that they act them at all!

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How long can their performance last? How far can the epigones of Stalinism go on liquidating the Stalinist legacy? Can "reform from above" abolish the totalitarian system, or what is left of it, and replace it gradually by a socialist democracy? Or is the development of such a democracy inconceivable without a revolutionary upheaval from below, at the mere threat of which, however, the present ruling group would retreat in panic from the road of reform?

The answer to this question is not a matter of theoretical preference either for "reform" or for "revolution" (as those of my critics seem to suppose who charge me with preaching a sort of an "inevitability of gradualness" for post-Stalinist Russia) but of the facts of the situation. The break with Stalinism has so far been carried out by the way of reform from above. The whole record to date of the post-Stalin years is one of an astoundingly intense reformist initiative coming from the ruling group. No doubt, this initiative must have been stimulated by a variety of pressures from below, which have made the ruling group aware of the incompatibility of the new structure of Soviet society with the Stalinist "superstructure." But the pressures from below have been only semiarticulate, at best. So much so that no one outside the Soviet ruling group has been in a position to measure them or even to define them with any degree of precision. In any case, no conscious and effective political initiative has so far come from below—no spontaneous mass movement, no new political organization, program, idea, or even slogan. (I am, of course, dealing with U.S.S.R. only; I cannot analyze here the different and in some respects more complex state of affairs in Eastern Europe.) True, political prisoners in the Vorkuta camps and elsewhere have struck to defend their rights; and Georgian students have demonstrated to defend . . . Stalin's memory. But these and possibly other similar and divergent manifestations of political action "from below," however significant as symptoms, have been confined to the fringes of political life and do not as yet add up to any national political movement from below, "reformist" or "revolutionary." The apparent absence of any such movement throws into even sharper relief the phenomenon of reform from above.

This state of affairs, too, has not been accidental. It reflects the gap which events of more than thirty years have created in the political consciousness of the nation. That Stalinism has "atomized"

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and reduced to amorphousness the political mind of the Soviet people is an oft-repeated truism. However, it is easier to repeat the truism than to draw the consequences which inevitably follow from it. In a society whose political consciousness has been atomized or reduced to amorphousness any major political change, if there is an overwhelming social need for it, can come only from the ruling group. This is precisely what has happened in Russia. No matter how much one may dislike Stalin's epigones, one must acknowledge that they have proved themselves capable of a much more sensitive response to the need for reform than was generally expected of them.

However, the present phase is one of transition. It can last only as long as it takes to bridge or fill the historically formed gap in the political consciousness of the Soviet people. The present degree of liberalization is probably just sufficient to allow some scope for new processes of political thought and opinion-formation to develop in the intelligentsia and the working class. By their nature these are molecular processes, which require time to mature. But once they have matured they are certain to transform profoundly the whole moral and political climate of Communism, and to transform it in a spirit of socialist democracy.

Only when the gap in the political consciousness of the Soviet masses and of the Soviet intelligentsia has been eliminated can de-Stalinization be brought to that ultimate conclusion to which Stalin's epigones can hardly carry it. To some extent, the change in the political climate is bound to coincide with a change of generations. It must take a few years more before the results of post-Stalinist opinion-formation show themselves and before new men come forward to expound new ideas and to formulate new programs. By that time the generation of Khrushchev, Bulganin and Co. will, in any case, be making its exit; and it may well be replaced at the head of affairs not by the men of the middle generation who have spent, and in part wasted, their best years under Stalinism, but by much younger people who are only now growing to political maturity.

Whether the change and replacement of ruling groups and generations will proceed gradually and peacefully or through violent convulsions and irreconcilable conflict is a question which need hardly and can hardly be resolved *a priori*. The whole development is quite unprecedented; and there are too many unknowns in the

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equations. One can at the most analyze the conditions under which the change, or the series of changes, can run its course in a relatively peaceful and reformist manner; and those under which the reformist phase would prove to be a mere prelude to violent upheaval. The subject is too large, complex, and speculative to be tackled in this contribution. Moreover, whatever the variant of the historic development, the essential prerequisite for it is the same: the emergence of a new and genuine political consciousness, which will be neither crippled by the imposition of any monolithic pattern nor falsified by totalitarian myths. De-Stalinization makes possible and even inevitable the crystallization of such a consciousness. Therein lies its progressive significance.

G. L. ARNOLD

"Communism now" is the sort of subject one would gladly leave to the specialists, were it not that they have so frequently proved mistaken. This may be due to ordinary human frailty, but more probably it is a matter of being imperfectly aware of the peculiar mechanism which makes the Communist orbit what it is. The point can be illustrated by quoting a remark made in private not long ago by a Communist leader who holds a key position in an Eastern European country. He was discussing the prospects of de-Stalinization with a Western Socialist, and in the course of conversation he casually remarked that of course all this related only to Europe and perhaps the U.S.S.R.: the Chinese Communist Party, by contrast, was only now about to enter its Stalinist phase, "and since China is a more primitive country than Russia one must expect Chinese Stalinism to be worse than Russian." His interlocutor, being himself a Marxist, needed no elaboration of this point which some people might have found surprising: every Communist realizes (even if he does not say so) that Stalinism was the price the U.S.S.R. had to pay for the policy of breakneck industrialization and wholesale collectivization to which the Russian Communist Party committed itself in the '30s. To deprive the peasant of his land and drive him

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into the factories an iron dictatorship was needed, and since the Peking Government seems determined to embark on the same experience—though admittedly with greater caution—it follows (at least if you are a Marxist) that it must in time produce its own variant of the Stalinist terror: if indeed it has not already done so.

Now it is possible to counter this line of reasoning by pointing to the uniqueness of the Soviet experience. The Russians after all were first in the field, and in principle it is open to the Chinese and others to avoid their worst and bloodiest mistakes. One may also, if one feels so inclined, draw some retrospective comfort from the revelations about Stalin's personal rule which have become orthodox since the Twentieth Party Congress last February. Although Khrushchev has not said so, it is conceivable that he and his colleagues now regard the wholesale massacre and deportation of the *kulaks* as the greatest of Stalin's criminal blunders, and that Mao Tse-tung at any rate is determined to sidestep this particular pitfall. But taken by and large, the major features of the Stalinist experience seem inseparable from the attempt to telescope a century of industrial history into a decade, and to do it dictatorially and at the expense of the population. In its own way, the long-winded resolution of the CPSU's Central Committee published in *Pravda* on July 2nd gets to the bottom of the matter when it asserts that under the given conditions there was no alternative to letting Stalin govern dictatorially. The talk about "limitations of democracy" imposed by the need "to build Socialism" under conditions of "capitalist encirclement" can be dismissed as the automatic paternoster of a regime committed to the defense of Stalin's heritage; but to Communists such phrases have an operational meaning when they are applied to the problems of backward countries where Communists have only recently (or not yet) come to power. What they suggest is a qualified defense of the Stalinist pattern as being rational—and so it is, if one subtracts the murderous and pathological aspects of the particular experience undergone by Russia in the '30s and '40s. This, and not "Moscow control," is the real obstacle to genuine de-Stalinization among the East European satellites, and further afield, in the fiefs now precariously occupied by Togliatti and Thorez. Reject the pattern, and what is left of the claim that Communism can industrialize faster than capitalism?

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But the obverse also applies: accept the pattern, and there is no need to defend or justify what was peculiarly barbarous, murderous and pathological about one man's personal rule. The essentials can be safeguarded. This is a recurring experience in revolutions: once a breakthrough to a new political and organizational level has taken place, the protagonist can be ditched. It is already clear that, if Moscow has its way, we are going to get Stalinism without Stalin. Of course Moscow may fail to have its way, even in the satellites, and for all one knows Mao Tse-tung may become the symbol of a somewhat less sanguinary method of depriving the peasant of his property. As against these possibilities one may note the evident reluctance with which so many Communists in Asian and Islamic countries approach the subject of de-Stalinization. It is not inconceivable that, even on the intellectual and moral-political level, Stalin will remain a hero to the average Communist in, say, Persia; just as it is probable that his reputation will suffer most among Communists imbued with the Latin, and especially the French, revolutionary tradition. Here there may be some belated conversions to the view that Trotsky was right about the man after all. But these shadings hardly affect the essential unity of the Communist movement as a world-wide attempt to impose by force a pattern of society modeled upon the U.S.S.R. Only if the Communists begin to realize that the attempt is hopeless and anachronistic, will it be possible to say that the Stalinist inheritance has really been repudiated.

Traces of such an incipient revisionism have been detected in some recent utterances of the Italian Communist leadership, and it is at least conceivable that this mood may eventually spread to France. If it does, the two most important Communist parties in Europe will in effect have adopted the position already occupied for some years by the Yugoslavs; for it is the essence of the theoretical standpoint publicly and privately maintained by Tito, Kardelj and their closest supporters that, since the entire world is gradually moving in a socialist direction, the Soviet doctrine on the existence of "two camps" is outmoded and politically dangerous. This attitude seems to have survived a succession of political maneuvers; it is evidently grounded in real conviction, and if it ever became the unspoken doctrine of West European Communism, it would be very

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difficult for the Kremlin to maintain its organizational hold over some of the mass movements it now controls. For that hold is in the last resort determined by a community of outlook which has hitherto been proof against the worst shocks administered to Communist loyalties by the sanguinary record of Stalinism at home and abroad. For practical purposes Communism since 1917 has implied not just belief in the "October Revolution" as the starting point of a new epoch in world history, but a commitment to the Soviet Union—and latterly the Sino-Soviet bloc—as the chosen instrument of global reconstruction. The socialist revolution is envisaged as a process in which a certain group of countries, having climbed onto the new historical level, confront and eventually absorb the shrinking capitalist remnant. This concept is central to Stalinism, and it is all the more difficult for Communists to abandon since it is already implicit in Lenin's formulations on "uneven development" and the possibility of socialist revolutions in scattered areas of the globe. In its semi-conscious combination with Russian (and Chinese) nationalism-cum-imperialism it supplies a motive-force so powerful that its abandonment could hardly fail to produce a first-class crisis of confidence among the inheritors of the Leninist tradition.

One is thus brought up against the problem of what is to happen to the Communists once they let go the theoretical certainties which have hitherto sustained them and armed them against doubt. Even the Yugoslavs have not traveled very far down this dangerous road, although one detects in their utterances a growing awareness that Leninism-Stalinism may turn out to be a political pattern suited only to certain backward countries in the throes of industrialization. ("It is our misfortune," they now tell the critical Western visitor, "that Communists have hitherto come to power only in poor and wretched countries.") From this admission to the realization that Communism is wholly unsuited to rich and progressive countries, there is only one step, and some of the party leaders seem to have made it. But it is just on this point that the post-Stalin leadership in the U.S.S.R. has proved most obdurate: backward Russia may have been, thirty years ago (and this is now indeed put forward as an excuse for Stalin's reign of terror), but today the Soviet Union is proclaimed at least the equal of the United States in all respects save material wealth, and tomorrow she is to excel in this domain too.

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And as for the notorious Tito-Kardelj doctrine on the gradual spread of socialist tendencies throughout the world, and the consequent undesirability of political and doctrinal exclusiveness, only the new cult of politeness prevents Moscow from stigmatizing it as heresy.

For heresy it undoubtedly is. In technical terms it is an "Austro-Marxist" rather than a Leninist view, and if it ever comes to be adopted by a considerable number of Western Communists, the essential unity of the world Communist movement will be at an end. Togliatti's reputed vacillations on this subject are an infinitely more serious matter for the Kremlin than any number of workers' risings in Eastern Europe. Revolts can be suppressed, and will be, as long as the Soviet army stands ready to move against any serious threat, and as long as the satellite governments can draw on Soviet economic resources to get over their worst difficulties. Nationalist sentiment can be assuaged by half-serious promises to let Poland have the kind of relative independence enjoyed, say, by Mexico; and democratic stirrings can be appeased by intraparty "primaries" modeled on Western patterns; but let the worm of doubt creep into the theoretical fabric, and the political structure cannot hold. Communism stands and falls by what Communists believe to be the case about the relationship of their movement to the rest of the world. If ever they come to see it as only one tendency among many—and not the most important one at that, so far as the advanced countries are concerned—belief in victory will vanish, and with it the totalitarian drive to reshape the world. There will then remain little more than a gigantic pressure group held together by slogans no longer related to the will to make a complete break with tradition: one more political party competing for relative power within the framework of democratic society.

If this is the distant danger which threatens the Communist parties in the West, those in the East and in the Soviet orbit are confronted with the more immediate problem of effecting the transition to the post-Stalinist age under the slogan "back to Leninism." When one considers that the present "Soviet Thermidor" promises at the very least greater security, and perhaps greater power, for the managerial caste and the privileged upper crust generally, the current transmogrification of Stalinism into Leninism does not lack its humorous aspect. For what does Leninism imply if not a return to

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greater simplicity, equality and doctrinal purity—everything, in fact, that the new ruling stratum abhors? And yet the regime can rid itself of the Stalinist encumbrance only by appealing to the authority of Lenin. It must do so even at the risk of arousing expectations it cannot fulfill, and in the knowledge that the Soviet elite will go on paying lip service to Leninism—as it has been doing for a generation—while intensifying its collective pressure for greater privileges. Lenin is too potent a symbol to be neglected at such a testing time. He would have to sanctify even so improbable (in the short run) an event as the effective displacement of the Party by the Army as the highest authority in the State. No military leader could rise to power without invoking the magic name, and in all probability this would be done with some degree of sincerity.

The present operation nonetheless has its dangers. What is a mere slogan to the Party leaders may be taken seriously by their followers, and perhaps by aspirants to power who would like to relegate the Party to second place. How these conflicting tendencies can be assembled under one roof is a problem that may well tax the ingenuity of the ruling stratum for years to come. "Back to Lenin" is a splendid slogan, on condition that it is not taken literally. What if it becomes a rallying-point for genuinely democratic tendencies? Lenin has not, after all, been dead long enough for pious evocations of his memory to be entirely harmless. If there is trouble in the near future it is likely to stem from this most impeccable of Communist saints.

The great unsolved problem, assuming that the retreat to "Leninism" can be executed without disaster to the ruling group, is the future role of the Party in a society which in some respects has outgrown its guidance. Totalitarianism means in practice that State and Party must be merged at the highest level; ideally they should meet in the person of a single autocratic ruler. It is arguable that in repudiating this pattern the present collective leadership has set itself in opposition to the logic of the system. If this is so, one must expect a new personal dictatorship to emerge from the present confused gropings of Stalin's heirs. Autocracy would seem to be required to harmonize relations between the Party and the Army: twin pillars of an overcentralized regime who must stand or fall together. It was not the least of Stalin's achievements that he was

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able to impose his authority upon both—at the cost, it is true, of terrorizing them into submission. Now that the remnants of his prestige are being shared out among political bosses and military leaders, each group may try to win the allegiance of an increasingly homogeneous privileged stratum. And this struggle must be waged in terms appropriate to a society which after almost forty years of Communist rule has become deeply committed to institutions whose real function is wholly at variance with the official ideology. Because the new integration appears to call for a renewed concentration of authority at the very topmost level of the hierarchy, even Communists who admire Lenin must feel that their trials are not yet over.

If these problems are urgent and difficult for the Soviet leaders, they are positively dramatic for the East European satellites, as the Poznan revolt showed. The obvious parallel to Poznan is the East Berlin rising of June 1953; the not so obvious but equally relevant comparison is with Kronstadt in 1921. After Kronstadt, Lenin introduced economic concessions, but tightened the apparatus of political control and thus opened the way to Stalin. This is the orthodox Communist reaction to any challenge which has genuine mass support. It is difficult to see how the Polish Communists, and the rest of the satellites, can escape the logic of their single-party tyranny, even were they to make economic concessions big enough to satisfy the workers. Comparisons with Russia in 1956 are deceptive. The Soviet economy is a going concern, and the Soviet party is a powerful, well-established stratum which can afford to "liberalize" without losing control: Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin was a sign of self-confidence. The East European regimes are a thin crust over molten lava—a crust which itself consists of lava only a little less fiery than the underlying substance. Any crack on the surface threatens to release the accumulated pressures. That is why, paradoxically, the "thaw" is less dangerous in Russia, where it is absorbed by the privileged Soviet elite, than in the European satellites, with their recent memories of relative freedom. In Moscow, the end of terrorism is gratefully acknowledged. In Warsaw, Budapest and Prague it stimulates demands for genuine liberty, or at the very least for a degree of self-government and decentralization that makes nonsense of single-party control and the planned economy as understood by Communists. Are the workers to have the right to strike? Is the price mecha-

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nism to be restored? Are the peasants to be relieved, once and for all, of the fear that they will be driven into collectives? What is left of Stalinism if these steps are taken—and if Stalinism is repudiated *in toto* and not just on paper and for the benefit of the ruling elite, how much is left of *Leninism?* These are questions that no Communist party has yet dared to face. They will have to be faced if the "thaw" is not to give way to another ice age.

IRVING HOWE

So much has by now been written about the Twentieth Congress of the Russian Communist Party that, to avoid repeating what someone else is likely to say, I shall confine myself to a few remarks concerning the analytical difficulties created by the new events:

1. During the past two decades most Western liberals and socialists have tried to grapple with the problem of Russian society by constructing a model of a unique phenomenon called totalitarianism. Naturally, the best political analysts have focused on what seemed unprecedented in Russian and German totalitarianism: the role of terror as an integral element of this new society; the terrifying power of ideology as both the mental equivalent of terror and a means for dominating the total life of man; the extreme atomization of social life, so that classes tend to become pulverized into a passive and anonymous mass; the consolidation of a ruling elite which appropriates to itself not merely a variety of goods or a monopoly of power but the very possession of the state and of its citizens.

Now, if we take as typical of this approach Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* and Orwell's *1984,* we see that both books, whatever their faults and "exaggerations," did us an immense moral and intellectual service by insisting that totalitarianism was not merely an extension of monopoly capitalism, Russian expansionism, Leninist dictatorship, man's inherent sinfulness, or anything else. To one or another extent, such elements were present in the totalitarian regimes, but what made them so powerful and frightening was their break with old traditions, be they good or bad traditions; precisely,

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that is, the extent to which they embodied that which is distinctively new in the totalitarian ethos. That no actual society behaved quite like the one Arendt described or Orwell imagined is hardly a cogent criticism of their books, for the value of a model depends partly on its not pretending to take into account fluctuations of local events.

If I now suggest that a possible conclusion from the recent Russian changes is that this model of totalitarianism—let us agree to call it the political model—is no longer sufficient, I do not mean to suggest that it has lost its usefulness. There is a sense in which the very difficulties encountered on the analytic plane require that we stress all the more strongly the moral premises that were often the stimulant toward constructing this model. Yet it does begin to seem that the political model of totalitarianism needs to be supplemented, and drawn into a tension, with more traditional forms of socio-economic analysis.

The implicit assumption of Arendt, Orwell, and other such writers is that totalitarianism is a society which has achieved a kind of stasis, even if one of systematized chaos; a society that has established an equilibrium between the flow of terror that is essential to its existence and the energies that make possible the permanence of this terror. In this respect, however, Orwell may have been shrewder than Arendt, since he anticipated a gradual slackening of both ideological and social hysteria in the totalitarian unfuture, a diminution of that ferocious intensity which has until now characterized all of totalitarian society and which Arendt so dramatically seized upon as a dominant factor of its existence. But while Orwell anticipated a gradual decline from fanaticism into torpor, he did not suppose that the decline might affect the continued employment of active terror. He did not consider that the energies making for terror might gradually run down and that, partly because of the consequences of forced industrialization, the practice of terror might be replaced by a policy of terror in reserve.

Similarly, the political model did not adequately prepare us for the possibility of the rise, not of a new bourgeoisie (for if the term is used with any exactness, there is no bourgeoisie in Russia), but of habits of life that we generally associate with the bourgeoisie. Terror, since it cannot safely be confined to a chosen sector of the population, must frighten the rulers too, and more, it must weary them. In

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Khrushchev we have a representative of those members of the ruling stratum who, just because they are the products and survivors of Stalinism, now want to relax a little and savor their privileges: they express a political equivalent of the psychology of the *nouveau riche*. The big question is whether a touch of relaxation will stimulate an appetite for a great deal more of freedom, and whether the immediate social impulses of the Russian rulers toward indulgence, aggrandizement, and their own brand of "moderation" will not come into a major clash with their basic political interests, which require above all else the continued iron domination of the party.

The political model of totalitarianism has given us an extremely acute sense of the quality of Russian society and has helped us maintain a moral response; but now, without abandoning it, we should recognize that there have been factors at work in molding Russian society which cannot be accounted for in terms of this model and are not peculiar to totalitarianism. Most notably, of course, there has been the rapid process of industrialization which does not insure any progress or liberalization, certain new apologists for Communism claim, but which does make possible new social and political forms within totalitarianism.

So that while the concept of the "mass society," which lies behind the work of Arendt and other writers, remains extremely valuable, it now becomes necessary to bring to bear the methods of class and institutional analysis in order to understand the repressed social formations, the hidden class alignments and struggles, that exist beneath the surface of Russian life. Between the theory of mass society and the methods of class analysis there may be a conceptual clash, but the reality of Russian society requires, I think, an eclectic employment of both.

2. One of the theoretical possibilities that needs to be considered is that a convergence is taking place in the characters of the major societies in the world. Just as totalitarianism is becoming a trifle "liberal," so the liberal world has been showing impulses in the direction of totalitarianism, or at least authoritarianism. To some extent this convergence—a convergence, I had better say, is not an identity—is the result of a universal breakdown of values; perhaps to a greater extent, it is the result of an uncontrolled socio-economic process closely related to, yet not quite the same as, the growth of industrialization.

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This process, which is as difficult to label as it is easy to observe, involves the increasing helplessness of individual man, the loss of energy and direction among traditional social movements, the lessening of distinctions between political and economic power, the triumph of the state in every area of economics and culture, the "machinization" of life—and *perhaps* a partial solution in the future of those material problems that were the occasion for, but not the true motive behind, the rise of socialism. It may be that a world-wide solution to the problem of hunger is inseparable from at least a serious effort to solve other, less tangible problems; and in a sense it would be reassuring to think so. But if we are honest we should face the possibility—it is surely no more than that—of a general trend toward a society that would be a sort of low-pressured, usually non-terroristic yet essentially unfree authoritarianism, a society that might provide men with food, television, and houses of a kind but would not permit or encourage them to achieve true human status.

It would be pleasant to learn that this is merely a bad dream of my own.

3. One of the mildly amusing aspects of the Russian problem is that the issues debated by Marxists fifteen or twenty years ago have a way of cropping up once more among people who haven't the faintest notion that they are repeating old and weary polemics. For years the anti-Stalinist Left used to debate the question: Does Russia need a political reform within the regime or a deep-going social revolution that would transform class and institutional relations? Today this seemingly abstruse question has acquired a new seriousness. The impulse among certain intellectuals to effect a rapprochement with the Russian regime will find as its rationale the claim that all Russia needs is a reform from on high, a gradual dripping down of moderate quantities of democracy. Trotsky's unfortunate theory that Russia was a corrupted "workers' state" will now become popular among people who never heard of it and who will now advance it without any of his redeeming revolutionary passion.

But is not a reform of totalitarianism a contradiction in terms? Given the existence of a statified economy, serious political changes *are* socio-economic changes; the establishment of political democracy in Russia, far from being a desirable adornment or improvement, would involve the profoundest shifts in class relations and social power.

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Some American liberals may not understand this, but Khrushchev does; and that is why he keeps insisting that the party must be "master," which is to say, that the ruling class must retain its power.

Whether one can speak of a ruling class in Russia that has gained the stability of the bourgeoisie in the early capitalist era, is not an immediately vital question. What is important is that Russian society, far from being a mere deformation of the socialist ideal, is an exploitative class society, and that in this society political domination is the means toward economic oppression. The ruling class or stratum, which functions through the party but is not confined to it, establishes the conditions and relations of production; it enjoys a mode of existence that sets it apart from other social classes; it determines the way in which the surplus national product is to be used, and does so with a freedom and ruthlessness no capitalist class has ever been able to command. So that if one identifies Stalinism with certain political characteristics that are not essential to this society, one can say that the recent changes involve the dissolution of Stalinism; but if one identifies Stalinism with a system of social relations, a totalitarian collectivism, then it makes sense to speak of Russia today as Stalinism without Stalin. For the essence of the recent changes is an effort to re-establish the authority of the dominant strata of the Communist party, that is, to consolidate and "legitimate" the position of the ruling class by repudiating the system of personal rule that helped bring it into being.

4. The death of political Stalinism leaves the vulgar kinds of anti-Stalinism without a future. Just as it will become harder to oppose Russian power, so will it become harder to oppose the intellectual claims of its apologists. Analytically this will require more flexibility; morally, a greater intransigence. Most of all, it will require a greater political independence, a greater readiness to think radically than most American intellectuals have recently shown. For now we shall no longer have Stalin helping us.

(This discussion of Communism after Stalin will be continued in future issues of PR.)

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Frank Budgen

FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS OF JAMES JOYCE

Joyce was born on February 2, Candlemas, of the year 1882, and I on March 1, St. David's Day of the same year, so that he was my senior by twenty-six days. My book, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses,* appeared in 1934 when Joyce was still with us and, as some may remember, that book contained, among other matters, some personal recollections of the author of *Ulysses* designed to give the reader an idea of the man as well as of his work. Here I set forth a few more such recollections with the same end in view. They follow no plan, unless there is a concealed plan in the seemingly haphazard operations of memory. Should any of them appear trivial I entrench myself in advance behind Joyce's own doctrine, which was that a place where three or four roads meet is a good place to look and listen for talk and happenings that signify much.

As I knew him Joyce liked to talk about his work when he could find an understanding listener, and particularly he liked to talk about that upon which he was actively engaged, and I surmise that this talk served a dual purpose. It kept his mind fixed upon the matter in hand, and it provoked responsive comment which might, and often did, prove useful to him.

Understandably the talk in Zürich turned generally on *Ulysses,* and I can remember few references in that period to his play, *Exiles.* But later in Paris, in the autumn of 1933, he referred to *Exiles* in connection with my book on *Ulysses.* The reference is important because of the light it throws on the Joycean conception of sexual love (at any rate on the male side) as an irreconcilable conflict between a passion for absolute possession and a categorical imperative of absolute freedom. It occurred during a short stay I made in Paris on my way to Switzerland. I had sent the proofs of my book on in advance, and Joyce and Stuart Gilbert had begun to read them. For my short stay I was the guest of the Joyces.

There is a passage in my book in which I try to explain the motives for Bloom's conduct as, seemingly, a *mari complaisant.* Readers of *Ulysses* all remember that in the Sirens episode Bloom watches Blazes

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Boylan's exit from the Ormond Hotel, well knowing that the organizer of Molly Bloom's concert tour is bound for 7 Eccles Street, and that in all probability an act of adultery will there take place. What was to be explained was Bloom's inactivity when, seeing that the drift of events is toward his wife's infidelity and his own cuckoldry, he makes no effort to stem the drift. Rather he contemplates in advance the *fait accompli* with a sort of cool, detached fatalism.

Joyce said: "You see an undercurrent of homosexuality in Bloom as well as his loneliness as a Jew who finds no warmth of fellowship among either Jews or Gentiles, and no doubt you are right. But there is another aspect of the matter you seem to have missed."

"And that is?"

"Have you ever read or seen *Le Cocu Magnifique*?"

I told him I hadn't and waited for the sequel.

"You ought to read it," he said. "Do you remember I wrote to you soon after I came to Paris that *Exiles* was to be put on by Lugné Poe, and that in the end nothing came of it? You do? Well, it was *Le Cocu Magnifique* that took the wind out of the sails of *Exiles*. The jealousy motive is the same in kind in both cases. The only difference is that in my play the people act with a certain reserve, whereas in *Le Cocu* the hero, to mention only one, acts like a madman. Make all the necessary allowances, and you'll see that Bloom is of the same family."

It was not difficult to see the family likeness in Leopold Bloom and Richard Rowan as soon as it was pointed out. In due course a copy of *Le Cocu Magnifique* was forwarded to me in Switzerland, and sure enough there was the same theme—only heavily scored for the brass. Richard and Leopold provoke and let happen, whereas the magnificent cuckold stands by with his shotgun and his *"Malheur à celui que ne vient pas."* Unfortunately it was then too late for me to make the desirable addition to my own text.

Apropos the said galley proofs: as they were read aloud by Gilbert or myself they were placed one after the other on Joyce's knees, from which insecure position they slithered, as is their way, a few at a time on to the floor. As soon as Joyce stooped to pick up the fallen ones others slipped off to take their place. Joyce's comment was: "Galley proofs remind me of the persons of the Trinity. Get firm hold of one of them and you lose grip on the others."

This theological image occurs again in a letter to me dictated to his daughter Lucia and sent to me shortly after I left Paris for Switzerland. Joyce was very interested in my working something about the *"altkatholische Kirche"* into my record of life in Zürich. He felt that a picture of that noble city would be incomplete without such a refer-

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ence. The relevant part of the letter reads: "The 'old Catholic' Augustiner Kirche is a good example of a Mookse gone Gripes. It separated from Rome in '71 when the infallibility of the Pope was proclaimed a dogma, but they have since gone more apart. They have abolished auricular confession; they have the Eucharist under two species, but the faithful receive the cup only at Whitsun. I see no prayers to the BVM or the saints in their prayerbook and no images of these or her round the church. But most important of all, they have abolished the *filioque* clause in the creed concerning which there has been a schism between the East and the West for over a thousand years, Rome saying that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son, Greece and the East Orthodox churches that the procession is from the Father alone, *ex patre* without *filioque*. Of course the dogmas subsequently proclaimed by Rome after the split are not recognized by the East, such as the Immaculate Conception—See the Mookse and the Gripes [Note: This is of course in *Finnegans Wake*. F. B.] that is East and West, par. beginning, 'When that Mooksius' and ending 'philioque.' All the grotesque words in this are in Russian or Greek for the three principal dogmas which separate Shem from Shaun. When he gets A and B on his lap C slips off, and when he has A and C he loses hold on B. . . ."

Joyce alluded to the split of 1871 in the course of a conversation with me in Zürich, but all that I can remember of it (perhaps the question interested me little at the time) is his final word: "What I can't understand," he said, "is, why do they boggle at the infallibility of the Pope if they can swallow all the rest." The Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church in its Irish form was a net he had flown by, but having won the freedom he needed, he could admire the Church as an institution going on its own way unperturbed in obedience to the law of its own being. "Look, Budgen," he said. "In the nineteenth century, in the full tide of rationalist positivism and equal democratic rights for everybody, it proclaims the dogma of the infallibility of the head of the Church and also that of the Immaculate Conception."

Joyce's attitude toward the Christian religion was twofold. When he remembered his own youthful conflict with it in its Irish-Roman form he could be bitterly hostile, but in general, viewing it as a whole as an objective reality and as epitomized human experience, and from a position well out of reach of any church's authority and sanctions, it was for him a rich mine of material for the construction of his own myth. Then he was a collector displaying all a collector's ardor, as in the case of the *altkatholische Kirche* referred to above.

Little as I suppose the Anglican *via media* would have appealed

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to his cast of mind, he must on one occasion in Zürich have attended an Anglican service, for I remember him telling me how well a certain consular official read the lessons. Only once did I see a Catholic priest in the Joyces' lodgings in Zürich. When I called I found Joyce patiently trying to get a little Belgian priest to talk about church music, whilst the priest himself insisted on discoursing on the theme of *"une mort tres edifiante"* he had just witnessed. I felt that Joyce was not amused.

August Suter told me that Joyce accompanied him once to a High Mass at the Church of St. Sulpice, and that Joyce explained to him (a Protestant) the meaning of each action as the Mass proceeded. When asked by August Suter what he regarded as his principal gain from his Jesuit upbringing, Joyce replied: "How to gather, how to order and how to present a given material." A discipline worth possessing whoever the drill sergeant.

The cosmology, hagiology and the sacraments of the Christian religion are built into the façade of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* for all to see, but it might perhaps one day profitably interest a theologian to inquire how far the rejected doctrines of the Churches pervade the inner structure of those works. For example: Is there a Manichaean leaning in Joyce's "spirit and nature" duality? Does he in his treatment of the mystery of fatherhood affirm or deny the consubstantiality of father and son? And what of the major theme of *Finnegans Wake*—the Resurrection?

For himself, as I say, religion was no longer a problem, but as a father (and Joyce was a good father) the problem must have cropped up again in another form. In his later Paris period he told me that he had been reproached for not causing his children to be brought up in the practice of religion. "But what do they expect me to do?" he said. "There are a hundred and twenty religions in the world. They can take their choice. I should never try to hinder or dissuade them." This was certainly true, for Joyce would never have denied to others the freedom he claimed for himself. But perhaps there are some situations where no completely satisfactory action is possible.

Very skeptical at first when I wrote him from London that I intended writing a book about *Ulysses* and the days we spent in Zürich, Joyce warmed to the project as it took shape, and when the book got to the stage of reading the galley proofs, he was positively enthusiastic. In a taxi driving up the Champs Elysées after a sitting of proofreading, he kept quoting bits of it from memory. And then: "I never knew you could write so well. It must be due to your association with me." While I was in Switzerland, in Ascona and Zürich, he dictated to his

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friend and *homme d'affaires,* Paul Léon, a number of suggestions which he urged me to work into the proofs. Some of these I used, others I failed to make use of, partly no doubt on account of my dilatoriness, but partly also because they were concerned with music or some other subject I feared to touch because of my ignorance of it. However, used or unused, I appreciated to the full the generosity that prompted so much proffered assistance.

For about two years during our stay in Switzerland, I met Joyce almost every day. Later, during his stay in Trieste and during the early part of his stay in Paris, he kept me informed by letter of the progress of *Ulysses.* For about five years after its publication, I lost touch with Joyce altogether. Then, hearing through Miss Sylvia Beach that I was in Paris, he wrote asking me to call. He was living *dans ses meubles* in the rue de Grenelle. From that time on I saw him whenever work or some other occasion took me to Paris and also on several occasions when he came to London.

I found the Joyce of Paris and *Finnegans Wake* different in many ways from the Joyce of Zürich and *Ulysses.* The resounding success of *Ulysses* had given him an air of established authority, and the task of composing *Finnegans Wake,* often amid weighty family cares, had taken some of the spontaneous naturalness out of his manner. But observers change together with things observed, and the flight of time shows different aspects of all of us, though never what isn't there.

It was some time in the early or middle thirties, I think (I can never remember dates: only occasions) that on one of our strolls somewhere near the Etoile Joyce surprised me by starting to talk bitterly about women in general. I was surprised only because I had never heard him talk that way before, for lives there a man who has never let himself go on the subject of womankind at some time or other? The interesting thing is always the how and the why and the how much. On the first of the two occasions I have in mind, he began with a bitter comment on woman's invasiveness and in general her perpetual urge to usurp all the functions of the male—all save that one which is biologically pre-empted, and even on that they cast jealous threatening eyes. So far nothing unusual. But then he stopped suddenly in his tracks as peasants and country people habitually do when they have something especially weighty to communicate.

"Women write books and paint pictures and compose and perform music. You know that."

"Yes, I do," I said. "And there are others who have attained eminence in the field of scientific research. But where does that get us?"

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"It brings me to this point. You have never heard of a woman who was the author of a complete philosophic system. No, and I don't think you ever will."

So that was it. The creator of Molly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle could never of course be a misogynist. No doubt a recent sojourn among women who were laying down the law about God and the universe, or, still worse, attempting to put him right on the matter of scholastic philosophy, was responsible for the outburst. But what for me makes the incident particularly worth recording is Joyce's designation of the demesne of philosophic inquiry as the one impregnable province of the mind reserved exclusively for the male. On the occasion of the second blast of the trumpet, I listened to a similar tirade on the same subject: woman and her urge to rivalize with menfolk in the things of the mind as well as to dominate them socially.

"But," I said, "as I remember you in other days you always fell back upon the fact that the woman's body was desirable and provoking, whatever else was objectionable about her."

This produced an impatient *"Ma che!"* and the further comment: "Perhaps I did. But now I don't care a damn about their bodies. I am only interested in their clothes."

Thus Stephen's interest in the "handful of dyed rags" survives his interest in the "squaw" they were pinned around. And when Joyce said clothes I took it for granted, knowing his bent, that he did not mean those wondrous garments devised by Dior, Fath, and others for the social adornment of the female form. I understood him rather to mean those garments visible only on the clothesline or on privileged private occasions. Throughout his life Joyce remained faithful to the underclothing of ladies of the Victorian era. Readers of *Ulysses* will remember the important part these articles played in that composition whether gleaming in the gloaming under the navy blue skirt of Gerty MacDowell or "redolent of Apoponax" in Molly Bloom's bedroom. They flutter also through the nightworld pages of *Finnegans Wake*. They were to Joyce feminine attributes of even greater value than the curves and volumes of the female body itself and certainly, as appears from the foregoing, of more abiding interest. Indeed he used, in the Zürich period, to carry a miniature pair in his trousers pocket until one sad day, as he sadly informed me, he lost them. A great number of Joyce's readers and admirers I am told inhabit the United States of America, and no doubt had he visited that hospitable country he would have been right royally entertained; and yet I cannot imagine his ever being wholly at his ease in a country where the word "drawers" is applied to those cumbersome

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and uninteresting male garments called "pants" by most of the inhabitants of the British Isles. For the word was for Joyce a word of power, and in it lay all the magic of the thing designated by it. To witness I call one of the pieces of advice he sent to me dictated to Paul Léon:

"As regards the Nausikaa chapter you will receive a ponderous volume of some six hundred large pages on the origin and history of what he chooses to call *Le Manteau de Tanit*. He believes this subject should be treated by you with IMMENSE seriousness, respect, circumspection, historical sense, critical acumen, documentary accuracy, citational erudition and sweet reasonableness. . . ." And on the same subject in a further dictated letter: "St. Bernard wrote, *'Qui me amat amat et canem meum,'* but the love philtre of Isolde is alluded to somewhere by her in W.i.P. [Note: *Work in Progress*] with this free translation, 'Love me, love my drugrs.' Verbum sap."

It has often been said of Joyce that he was greatly influenced by psychoanalysis in the composition of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. If by that is meant that he made use of the jargon of that science when it suited the purpose of his fiction, or made use of its practical analytical devices as when Bloom commits the *Fehlleistung* of talking about "the wife's admirers" when he meant "the wife's advisers," the point holds good. But if it is meant that he adopted the theory and followed the practice of psychoanalysis in his work as did the Dadaists and the Surrealists, nothing could be farther from the truth. The Joycean method of composition and the passively automatic method are two opposite and opposed poles. If psychoanalysis cured sick people, well and good. Who could quarrel with that? But Joyce was always impatient or contemptuously silent when it was talked about as both an all-sufficient *Weltanschauung* and a source and law for artistic production.

"Why all this fuss and bother about the mystery of the unconscious?" he said to me one evening at the Pfauen Restaurant. "What about the mystery of the conscious? What do they know about that?"

One might say that both as man and artist Joyce was exceedingly conscious. Great artificers have to be. As I saw him working on *Ulysses* I can testify that no line ever left his workshop without having been the object of a hundredfold scrutiny. And I remember my old friend August Suter telling me that in the early days of the composition of *Finnegans Wake* Joyce said to him, "I feel like an engineer boring through a mountain from two sides. If my calculations are correct we shall meet in the middle. If not. . . . " Whatever philosophy of composition that indicates, it is certainly neither automatic nor convulsive.

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On one occasion I stayed the night in the Joyces' flat in Paris. Joyce was ill and looked it, and Mrs. Joyce thought that an extra man in the house might come in handy in case of emergency. The emergency arose at about eight the next morning. I went into Joyce's room and found him short of breath, looking very pale with a cold damp forehead, and evidently holding on to himself very tightly in a state of intense anxiety. If I had known then what I learned later in Civil Defense during the war, I should have felt obliged to suggest first aid treatment for shock. Mrs. Joyce sent me for a doctor. Lunching with them later in the day I asked Joyce, then somewhat recovered, what the doctor had said, and Joyce replied that the doctor had asked him what he was afraid of.

"I told him," said Joyce, "that I was afraid of losing consciousness, and he said that from all the signs and symptoms, pulse, temperature, etc., I had nothing to fear on that score."

Unlike most natives of the British Isles, Joyce disliked and feared dogs, perhaps on account of his poor sight and the dog's unpredictable temper. He would never go in for his evening treatment in the eye-clinic in the rue du Cherche-Midi until Madame had doubly assured him that the dog was on the chain. But he had a considerable sympathy for the cat with its persuasive manners and its compact self-sufficiencies. One of the waiters at (I think) Fouquets gave the Joyces a black cat and on my first visit to them after this acquisition I found Joyce in the middle of the living room putting on an act of homeless despair.

"Look," he said, pointing to his chair on which François lay curled up and fast asleep. "Since this animal came to live with us I haven't a chair to sit on." I heard, alas, that François had to go. Unlike the London cat with his countless back gardens, the Paris cat has few free spaces where he can pursue his loves and wars and practice at leisure his fastidious sanitary engineering.

Once as we were walking up the Champs Elysées together, I pointed to a beautiful white goat harnessed to a children's cart and said how much I admired these courageous and inquisitive creatures. Joyce fully agreed and, stopping to contemplate the stately little animal, said he couldn't see why the goat had been selected as a satanic symbol. *"Hircus Civis Eblanensis."* There was a good deal of the surefootedness and toughness of the mountain goat in Joyce's own composition and more than a little of the relaxed vigilance of the cat.

The front that Joyce presented to the world was anything but that of the extrovert broth-of-a-boy Irishman of stage and screen, but in Zürich he did occasionally exhibit a certain impishness said to be an Irish characteristic. In Paris I saw none of this. I have known him, for

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example, to tell stories about me to third persons (certainly not to my discredit: indeed they were designed to make me out a bigger man than I am) and then he would tell me what he had told them and laugh gleefully, expecting me to join in the merriment. One of these stories was that I was a painter well known in court circles and that I had received an important commission from King George V himself. If I shared his merriment in any degree it was not without a mild fear that the story might get round, and then I should have to suffer the embarrassment that always lies in wait for the pretender.

Somewhat in the same vein, though quite harmlessly, he always spoke to me and about me as if I were a Cornishman, and that for the fifty per cent insufficient reason that my mother was a Cornishwoman. I told him often enough that my father was a native of County Surrey and that I was born and brought up in that County, and further that I had spent only a few months of my life in the delectable Duchy. But it made no difference. I was still a Cornishman. He would begin sentences with such openings as, "Your countryman, King Mark. . . ." Or, "As a Cornishman you'll. . . ." It was as if he wanted to rope me in to some select Celtic confederacy in which I certainly did not belong to be—as a Cornishman might say. But as Joyce himself said in one of his dictations to Léon, "We did not sing either 'The Wearing of the Green' or 'And Shall Trelawney Die?' in honor of our respective Irish and Cornish forbears." True, we didn't. But that may be explicable in the words of Calverly:

We never sing the old songs now.
It is not that we think them low,
But because we don't remember how
They go.

Joyce always held that the English never really hated the Germans, even in wartime, but looked on them as belonging to the same family, cousins perhaps, who were doing pretty well for themselves, maybe a bit too well, on the mainland of Europe.

Joyce associated a good deal with such Greeks as were available in wartime Zürich, for he thought they all had a streak of Ulysses in them. Although he knew some Greek he was not a Greek scholar by high academic standards. By chance one day I stumbled on the fact that this was a sore point with him. I told him that I left school and went to work in my thirteenth year, but that the only thing I regretted about my lack of schooling was that I was never able to learn Greek. He thereupon regretted his insufficient knowledge of that language but, as if to underline the difference in our two cases (or so I interpreted it)

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he said with sudden vehemence: "But just think: isn't that a world I am peculiarly fitted to enter?" As a work of reference for his *Ulysses* he used the Butcher-Lang translation of the *Odyssey*.

He joined Pearse's Irish class in Dublin, but said of Pearse that "in a classroom he was a bore." He told me that he couldn't stand Pearse's continual mockery of the English language, instancing in particular Pearse's ridiculing of the English word "thunder." This was probably the limit, for as all readers of *Finnegans Wake* can testify thunder was for Joyce a word laden with very big magic. He soon abandoned Irish in favor of Norwegian which he studied to such purpose that later he was able to translate James Stephens' poem, "The Wind on Stephen's Green," into Norwegian (as well as into Latin, Italian, German, and French). In any case Norwegian was for him an obvious choice as an alternative, for he regarded his native Dublin as fundamentally a Scandinavian city.

I have commented elsewhere on Joyce's reactions to the criticisms of Clutton Brock and H. G. Wells, but his remark when I mentioned Wyndham Lewis's criticism of *Ulysses* is worth recording: "Allowing that the whole of what Lewis says about my book is true, is it more than ten per cent of the truth?"

Joyce rarely referred to the work of his contemporaries. There is, however, a comment on Proust in a letter written to me in 1920. It reads: "I observe a furtive attempt to run a certain Marcel Proust of here against the signatory of this letter. I have read some pages of his. I cannot see any special talent but I am a bad critic." Joyce's first and, as far as I am aware, only meeting with Marcel Proust took place shortly after the end of the First World War at an evening party given by a wealthy Parisian lady in honor of the Russian ballet, then all the rage in Paris as elsewhere. The evening wore on and Joyce, having had a few drinks, was thinking of going home when in walked Marcel Proust dressed to the nines. Their hostess introduced them, and some of the guests gathered round to listen to what they thought might be brilliant conversation. "Our talk," said Joyce, "consisted solely of the word 'No.' Proust asked me if I knew the duc de so-and-so. I said, 'No.' Our hostess asked Proust if he had read such and such a piece of *Ulysses*. Proust said, 'No.' And so on. Of course the situation was impossible. Proust's day was just beginning. Mine was at an end." Poor visibility for stargazers.

Very soon after I had made his acquaintance in Zürich, Joyce and I were taking an evening stroll on the Bahnhofstrasse when the conversation turned upon the variants of the comic sense possessed by different nations. Joyce retold me a funny story told him by my friend

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and colleague, Horace Taylor, at that time in Zürich, and as Taylor was an Englishman Joyce supposed that it was a typically English funny story. Joyce didn't think it was funny at all, nor did I, another Englishman, for that matter, though I forget what it was—something about a man falling out of a window, I think. Then Joyce went on to tell me the story of how Buckley shot the Russian general in its original spit and sawdust taproom Irish idiom, a story which he regarded as exemplifying the exclusively Irish sense of the comic. He retells the story with baroque exuberance in the dream idiom of *Finnegans Wake,* following its manifold implications in the Taff-Shem Butt-Shaun dialogue, and the metamorphosis the story undergoes furnishes as good an example as any of the treatment the common stuff of life receives at Joyce's hands in that composition. Here is the story, in substance, in ordinary language and, in parentheses, some relevant passages from the Taff-Butt rendering of it.

Buckley on duty in the trenches before Sevastopol sights a high-ranking Russian officer coming into the open ("With all his cannonball wappents. In his raglanrock and his malakoiffed bulbsbyg and his varnashed roscians and his cardigans blousejagged and his scarlett manchokuffs and his treecoloured camiflag and his perikopendolous gaelstorms."), a general at least, and Buckley notes that he is about to obey a call of nature. ("Foin duhans! I grandthinked after his obras after another time about the itch in his egondoom he was legging boldylugged from some pulversporochs and lyoking for a stooleazy for to nemesisplotsch allafranka and for to salubrate himself with an ultradungs heavenly mass at his base by a surprime pompship. . . .") Now was the time for Buckley to do his duty as a soldier. There's the enemy. Whatever he's doing fire at him. But one touch of nature makes the whole world kin, and Buckley hasn't the heart to shoot a man in just that hour of need. ("But meac Coolp, Arram of Eirzerum, as I love our Deer Dirouchy, I confesses without pridejealice when I looked upon the Saur of all the Haurousians with the weight of his arge fallin upon him from the travaillings of his tommuck and ruecknased the fates of a bosser there was fear on me the sons of Nuad for him and it was heavy it was for me then the way I immingled my Irmenial hairmeierians ammongled his Gospolis fomiliours till, achaura moucreas, I adn't the arts to. . . .") So far, out of sympathy with a fellow mortal, Buckley has just looked on and has done nothing. But when he sees the Russian general claw up a piece of turf to make his parts clean his Irish temper boils up. He goes mad and ups with his gun and shoots the Russian general, presumably where Frankie shoots Johnnie in the well known ballad. ("For when meseemim, and tolfoklokken rolland allover our-

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land's lane, beheaving up that sob of tunf for to claimhis, for to wolpimsolff, puddywhuck. Ay, and untuoning his culothone in an exitous erseroyal Deo Jupto. At that instullt to Igorladns! Prronto! I gave one dobblenotch and I ups with my crozzier. Mirrdo! With my how on harmer and hits leg an arrow cockshock rockrogn. Sparro! . . .")

With regard to the language used by Joyce, particularly in *Finnegans Wake*, it is sometimes forgotten that in his early years in Dublin Joyce lived among the believers and adepts in magic gathered round the poet Yeats. Yeats held that the borders of our minds are always shifting, tending to become part of the universal mind, and that the borders of our memory also shift and form part of the universal memory. This universal mind and memory could be evoked by symbols. When telling me this Joyce added that in his own work he never used the recognized symbols, preferring instead to use trivial and quadrivial words and local geographical allusions. The intention of magical evocation, however, remained the same.

In spite of his more than semi-blindness, Joyce had a natural feeling for the visual arts. He once asked me to paint for him a salmon (an avatar of HCE) and I promised him that I would, but, alas, I never managed to fulfill my promise. My only excuse is that a whole salmon is a very big lump of fish and costs a lot of money. Besides, my family seeing me come home with one would be looking forward to salmon steaks, and in all likelihood by the time I had finished getting the noble fish on to canvas I should have had to bury it in the garden. But of one thing I am sure: Joyce would never have been satisfied with a picture of a disintegrated and synthetically reconstructed salmon. He loved and admired the natural appearance of the fish. "A salmon is a wonderful thing," he said to me, "so full and smooth and silvery." August Suter told me that when Tuohy was painting Joyce's portrait he started talking about the poet's soul. "Get the poet's soul out of your mind," said Joyce, "and see that you paint my cravat properly."

But, as is well known, the art that made the greatest appeal to him, apart from his own art of words, was the art of singing—singing with any voice, but particularly with the tenor voice, as all his work bears witness. He could admire a certain measure and some aspects the art of Count MacCormack, "the tuning fork among tenors" as he called him in one piece he wrote and "the prince of drawing room singers" once in talking to me. But his overwhelming enthusiasm was reserved for another countryman of his, Mr. Sullivan, for many years singer of leading tenor roles at the Paris Opera. This enthusiasm has already been alluded to by myself and others who have written about Joyce, but to what lengths it led him may be seen from the following descrip-

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tion of a certain evening at the Paris Opera when Sullivan was singing the part of Arnold in Rossini's *William Tell*. In one of his letters to me dictated to Paul Léon, Joyce said: "Perhaps Léon who is typing this will shoot you off a pen-picture describing my antics in the stalls of the Paris Opera for the scandal of the *blasé-abonné*, and the ensuing story in the press." Here is the pen-picture duly shot off by Léon and no doubt checked by Joyce:

Late Spring three years ago [Note: That would be 1930. F. B.] J. J. came back from Zürich after a second visit to Vogt. [Note: Dr. Vogt, the famous eye specialist. F. B.] Sight maybe a little better. Concert of Volpi heard. Also much talk about a performance of *William Tell* with Volpi in the part of Arnold. Conversations with Sullivan establish that Volpi had the entire score cut by some half of it and the key lowered by a half note. This Volpi performance is narrated with all sorts of compliments in the N. Y. *Herald* (Paris edition) by their official musical critic (M. Louis Schneider). Immediately a letter is written to him containing a wager by Sullivan to let him and Volpi sing both the part of Arnold in the original score in any concert hall—the arbiter to be Mr. Schneider and the stakes to be a copy of the original full score, nicely bound. Naturally no reply from either Schneider or Volpi. Yet Schneider had written that nobody at present could sing the part of Arnold as had been done by Volpi.

A week later, performance of *William Tell* with Sullivan. Sitting in the fifth row right aisle next to the passage your obedient servant, next to him J. J., next to him Mrs. Léon and next to her Mrs. Joyce—somewhere in the stalls an Irish Miss, correspondent of some paper, and a gentleman, correspondent of the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*.

First and second acts pass with great applause, J. J. being greatly enthused. Third act where there is no Sullivan on the stage spent in the buffet. Fourth act after the aria *"Asile héréditaire,"* sung with great *brio* and real feeling by S., applause interminable. J. J. excited in the extreme shouts, "Bravo Sullivan! *Merde pour Lauri Volpi.*" The *abonnés* (this being I believe a Friday) rather astonished, one of them saying: *"Il va un peu fort celui là."*

Half an hour later at the Café de la Paix: great conversation in which S. joins after he has changed his clothes. At the moment of parting the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* correspondent, having been talked to all the evening about music, approaches J. J. with the following words: "Thank you so much for the delightful evening. I have some pull with my paper, and should you wish I could arrange for an article or two by you on your Paris impressions to appear there."

J. J.: "Many thanks, but I never write for the newspapers."

The Correspondent: "Oh, I see, you are simply a musical critic."

Next day an article in the Press: "Monsieur James Joyce, after a successful operation, goes with friends to the Opera to hear his compatriot Sullivan sing in *William Tell*. Sitting in a box after the Fourth Act aria he takes off his spectacles and is heard saying: "Thank God I have recovered my eyesight."

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I always felt that originally Joyce was of an open, impulsive nature, but as we all know natures have a way of being modified by experience as well as of being subdued to what they work in, like the dyer's hand, and therefore I suppose that a spontaneous utterance of the natural Joyce might easily be checked and stifled by an acquired defensiveness. This is an attempt to explain in advance something that occurred during one of my visits to Paris in the early thirties. Joyce and I were alone in his apartment, and while I was looking at a book during a lull in the conversation he broke the silence with: "When you get an idea, have you ever noticed what I can make of it?" I looked up and waited for him to go on, feeling rather pleased with myself that I should have any ideas of such a caliber. But instead of going on he walked back and forth across the room, looked out of the window and changed the subject. I wish I had asked him there and then exactly what he meant, for it has cost me a lot of cogitation since then to arrive at a conclusion as to what the idea might be. Quite certainly it was an idea having a bearing on *Finnegans Wake,* and an important bearing at that—something fundamental. The words, phrases, anecdotes, snatches of song, and suchlike that he picked up every day from somebody or other were so numerous that he would have considered them hardly worth mentioning, and in any case he would not have used the word idea in connection with them. I come finally to rest on two possibilities. He may have been thinking of a talk we had in a café near the Amtshaus in Zürich. I told him on that occasion how much my dreams interested me, and explained the difficulty I had in making a written record of them. All the dream quality went out of them as soon as I turned them into a string of time-bound sentences. This is one guess. In any case I have always felt that at that session some seed was sown that later was to blossom into the dream language of *Finnegans Wake.* "That was the prick of the spindle to me that gave me the key to dreamland." It could be. Why not? There must be germ carriers also in the realm of ideas. Or it may have been a poem of mine I once showed him in which I tried to express a state of mind between sleeping and waking. I called the poem "At the Gates of Sleep," and it ended with the words "Sleep is best." If in the first guess, the suggestion was for the dream material of *Finnegans Wake,* in the case of the second guess the suggestion would be for the timeplace to be inhabited by his ". . . twin eternities of spirit and nature expressed in the twin eternities of male and female." The quotation is from *Stephen Hero.* Tracing a work of genius to its source is like searching for the source of a river. Eventually we come as with Anna Livia Plurabelle to the principle of evaporation and condensation working through the sea and the sky. But in a rough and ready way it

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is true that the original inspiration for all Joyce's work is always to be sought in the imaginings of his boyhood and adolescence in Dublin. The idea, of course, may have been in some word or other I let fall and forgot as soon as uttered, for, as he wrote to me during the composition of the Circe episode of *Ulysses*: "A word is enough to set me off." However, if both my guesses are wrong then Joyce's moment of inhibition must take the blame for my vain cogitations.

I talked with Joyce for the last time in the spring of 1939 when, having a little money in hand, and sensing that the outbreak of war was near, I went to Paris to see the city all artists love before enemy bombs should mar her noble skyline. It turned out otherwise, but that is the way some of us foresaw it at the time. Joyce was living in a flat in Passy. When I called on him, a copy of *Finnegans Wake* fresh from the printers lay on the table. In the course of the afternoon he asked me to read aloud to him Anna Livia's monologue as she passes out by day to lose her individual identity in the ocean whence she came. No doubt he knew every word of it by heart, and no doubt I blundered in the reading of it, but he let me go on to the end without interruption. It was perhaps the first time he had heard the words spoken by any voice other than his own. The last I saw of Joyce was his wave from a taxi late that afternoon.

I was to write an article on *Finnegans Wake* when I got back to London, but I found it heavy going with war a practical certainty looming close ahead. Later in 1939 Joyce and his family began that series of moves that were to end in Zürich in 1941. His self-exile in Europe may be said to have begun in "noble Turricum abounding in all manner of merchandise," and there it ended. He wrote me, though not frequently, during 1939 from Etretat, from Berne, and finally (as far as my record goes) from Gerard-le-Puy in the Allier—about literary reactions to *Finnegans Wake*, about his family anxieties (both his daughter and his daughter-in-law were ill), but never a word about the war, not even the most guarded reference. His entry into Switzerland was referred to in the press. Then came news of his sudden illness. A paragraph in the *Evening Standard* announcing his death was shown to me in the dugout where I was standing by to report air-raid damage. When I met Mrs. Joyce in Zürich after the war, she told me that during the day preceding the sudden onset of his fatal seizure Joyce had been to an exhibition of French nineteenth century painting. Somehow there seems to me to be an affinity there, I mean between French nineteenth century painters and Joyce, in the sense that all the work of his imagination and intellect was rooted, as was theirs, in a natural sensibility.

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BOOKS

THE POETRY OF SUBURBIA

THINGS OF THIS WORLD. By Richard Wilbur. Harcourt, Brace. $3.00.
THE DIAMOND CUTTER AND OTHER POEMS. By Adrienne Cecile Rich. Harper. $2.75.
A WAY OF LOOKING. By Elizabeth Jennings. Rinehart. $2.50.
SOME TREES. By John Ashbery. Yale University Press. $2.50.
FRIDAY'S CHILD. By Wilfred Watson. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $2.75.
SECTION: ROCK-DRILL 85-95 DE LOS CANTARES. By Ezra Pound. New Directions. $3.00.

The recent *Zeitgeist* in American culture is of suburban colors, manners, dress. Those who are currently publishing verse are affected by its daily habits and ambitions, and more than a few have mistaken its presence for a visitation of the Muse. The importance of the suburban *Zeitgeist* may not be enduring, but since the end of the Korean War, its influence has spread cross-country from the suburbs of Boston to the state of Washington, far beyond the toll-gates of large cities; and it can be heard and seen as vividly on a college campus as in Westchester or nearby Long Island. It is nourished by the magazines I find in my dentist's office: *The New Yorker, Life,* and *Time*. It may seem strange that popular culture should invade, and so thoroughly and quickly, the landscapes of academic life; it may not (I am sure it does not) represent academic thinking at its centers, yet on the fringes of the campus it is very much alive, geared to the speed of a two-toned—strawberry-pink and gingham-blue—station wagon. It is well known that most of the verse published today is brought forth in the temporary shelter of universities. Suburban culture has spread its wings over all the activities that surround the campus, and verse written in this atmosphere cannot help reflecting the surfaces of everyday experience.

Another factor influencing the spirit of the verse written today was the belated "discovery" of Wallace Stevens. Of course, he had been "discovered" long ago; but in the postwar years it was not only the wit and inventiveness of Stevens' work, it was the *image* of his success,

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both as an executive of an insurance company and as a poet, that caught and held the admiration of young men and women who wrote verse. It was rumored that he was rich, very rich, rich enough to escape all minor economic misfortunes and turns of chance. In the United States there has never been any sustained disrespect for wealth; roughness and the "homespun" manner are often enjoyed, but always with the hope of finding "a rough diamond" or "a heart of gold." So far as the best of Stevens' verse revealed him, he was a pluralist and a skeptic; and certain external features of his legend had become attractive to emulate. The new *Zeitgeist* quickly absorbed whatever it understood of this legend; then it acquired an air of "difference" from the forty years that separated it from the first publication of *Harmonium*. It disregarded conscious bohemianism and "sexual freedom," as well as the Left Wing politics of the 1930's, and the "academic" irony fashionable in the 1940's that was best represented by the little magazine *Furioso*.

The conventions of the new *Zeitgeist* were being formed. The more "advanced" younger poets had become instructors and lecturers and behind academic façades embittered laurels were being watered and cultivated; old-fashioned excess (if any) and toasts drunk to the memory of F. Scott Fitzgerald were reserved for holidays, or discreetly converted into weekend faculty cocktail parties. These younger poets began to use the word "elegance" in praising each other's writings, and if twenty years ago it had become fashionable to be "proletarian" in spirit, in the early 1950's, it had become a virtue to say that one could not live on less than ten thousand a year, that if one did not have hidden sources of wealth, it was a disgrace to live at all. Stevens' "elegance" was of mind and temperament, yet it was one that seemed easy to imitate in terms of the more garish advertising pages of *Harper's Bazaar, Vogue* and *The New Yorker,* the kind of literature that for a brief, wholly deceptive moment makes the reader feel like a luxury product himself, ready to join the "International Set," to be severe with middle-aged, wealthy American patronesses in Rome, and to drink at Harry's Bar in Venice. The word "elegance," like so many transitory usages of language in the United States, has become the choice of copywriters to sell everything the suburban matron wears. One might suspect collusion between the poets of *Harper's Bazaar* and the shopkeepers of Westchester.

One effect of the suburban influence has been to revive a kind of writing that had been forgotten since 1914. What used to be called "magazine verse" forty years ago is back in print again, decorously

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written, and admirably fitted to fill empty spaces between fiction and feature articles. One might call it the *New Yorker* school of verse.

Though the offices of *The New Yorker* are in New York, its heart is in the suburbs. The magazine is certainly the handbook of the suburban matron throughout the country. *The New Yorker* publishes a quantity of light verse, which is nothing to be ashamed of; but light verse that lives beyond the moment is extremely rare. It is rare because poetic wit itself is a rarity; what often passes for it is something "cute," something coy, something pleasant, harmless, or naughty-bitter. It should be well-formed; and not—by the same poet—reiterated too frequently in the same phrases. The cutting edge too frequently wears dull. Large indiscriminate doses of it tend to cloy. These truisms are probably known in the offices of *The New Yorker* and regretted—therefore, it has fallen back on publishing quasi-serious verse as well, constructed according to current formulas: certain verse forms used with enough caution to be recognized at once, certain images within the verses that recall the "happy-bitter" experience of childhood, the joy of collecting toys and the discovery that toys are perishable, the country places visited at home, the holiday from suburban security in Europe. The great discomfort in reading too much *New Yorker* verse is that the formula continually wears thin; it is not as cheering as it hoped to be—or as light and witty as Sandy Wilson's parody of the 1920's in his musical *The Boy Friend*. Reading too much *New Yorker* verse becomes a bore.

By these winding suburban roads I have come to Richard Wilbur's third book of verse, with its well-chosen title, *Things of This World*. It is a book that should utterly charm the *Zeitgeist*. It is undoubtedly the best of Wilbur's three books, and if his early reviewers have placed him among the better poets of his immediate generation, they have not been wrong. With the same care with which he has chosen his title he has selected poems for this volume; they are not too many, not too few; though he is in the *New Yorker* orbit he seems to float slightly beyond it. What Wilbur contributes to the verse of the *Zeitgeist* is an absolutely engaging personality with "the desire to please"[1] between the lines of every stanza. This is "the something new" that he has offered to the *Zeitgeist*. Some of the recent poems reflect his travels in

1 I quote Alain from an essay on education. An apt expression of what I mean is in Charles Churchill's lines on Lady Caroline Hervey:

That face, that form, that dignity, that ease,
Those powers of pleasing, with that will to please.

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Italy; the first poem in the book, "Altitudes," is among the best of written tributes to Emily Dickinson. His adaptation of Paul Valèry's "Helen" is written with excellent taste, restraint, and firmness; on second reading, more than half the poems in the book retain their charm. A second reading assures me that none of the poems would disturb the self-confidence of the young and smartly dressed suburban matron stepping from her station wagon on a sunny morning. She would probably enjoy most, wrinkling her forehead slightly—in the effort to recall *her* trips to Europe (on vacation from Radcliffe)—"The Beacon," with its images of deep sea water, and "Piazza Di Spagna, Early Morning"; the girl in that poem must have been the way *she* looked when *she* spent three days in Rome. And since she has, of course, read Robert Frost, she would be delighted at hearing familiar Frostian accents in Wilbur's "Digging for China." She might even imagine that her own Junior, age three, would enjoy digging for China in New Jersey, and hope that he, twenty-five years later, would recall the scene as memorably as Richard Wilbur does.

But if one has a long memory for verse, which unfortunately I possess, further rereadings of Wilbur's verse bring doubts to mind. "Piazza Di Spagna" becomes a reduced, less memorable flutter of lines that recreate Eliot's "*La Figlia Che Piange.*" There is also much pleasure in reading Wilbur's "A Voice from Under the Table"—until one remembers Phelps Putnam's "Hasbrouck and the Rose." Both the resemblance and the contrast between the two poems bring up embarrassing questions: Putnam's poem is direct; passionate young fools are drunk and talking aloud. In contrast to Putnam's, Wilbur's poem is overdressed and a shade pretentious—and his phrase, "God keep me a damned fool," rings false, false because Wilbur seems so expert at contriving certain of his lines. It well may be that he feels a necessity to reiterate his adaptation of Francis Jammes' "A Prayer to Go to Paradise with the Donkeys"—but one gains no other evidence from Wilbur's writing that he is foolish. These are my doubts—but I am also convinced that *Things of This World* will be regarded by many as the best single book of poems published this year; and I believe that Wilbur's charm should not be underrated.

Like Richard Wilbur, but with less caution, Adrienne Rich in her new book, *The Diamond Cutters,* though of the *New Yorker* circle of poets, reaches beyond it. She is less professionally at ease than Richard Wilbur; her book leaves the unfortunate impression that she is writing too many verses too hastily, and that she has followed too closely

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certain models in popular anthologies of contemporary verse.[2] Like Wilbur she gives her reports on a trip to Europe, but the greatest difficulty the reader has in rereading her book is the overhearing of contemporary clichés reiterated, which is probably the fault of the *Zeitgeist,* or of a faulty use of it, with too many poets trying to write of the same things at the same time. One too quickly discovers in her poem, "The Tree," an alarming series of derivations—from one of Eliot's minor poems, from Elinor Wylie's "Chimaera Sleeping," from Elizabeth Bishop's "The Weed." The poem is too much like a classroom exercise; good enough, but not her own. Her gift is for the semi-dramatic poem: "The Bears," as a poem of childhood memories, could be described as a companion piece to Wilbur's "Digging For China." She is at her best in "Living in Sin" because she treats of a familiar situation—the bohemian love affair—with a discerning, yet objective eye. Her next book should find her more assured.

To be derivative is not a crime; no poet lives in a literary vacuum. The question is: How derivative can you be and yet show the reader you have something to say that is your own—your own language, your own look at the world, your own music? If these remains are worth publication, well and good.

An example of divorce from the *Zeitgeist* is Elizabeth Jennings' *A Way of Looking,* a book of forty well-selected poems. (Miss Jennings, by the way, has contributed to *The New Yorker,* but is untouched by its formula.) Miss Jennings is English—and the curse of contemporary British verse is an imageless run of too many toneless words, in which, at their worst, these poems share. At her best, Miss Jennings knows her own mind; free of her instructors, her voice is heard in "Mirrors":

Was it a mirror then across a room,
A crowded room of parties where the smoke
Rose to the ceiling with the talk? The glass
Stared back at me a half-familiar face
Yet something hoped for. When at last you came
It was as if the distant mirror spoke.

2 In respect to popular anthologies certain important critical distinctions should be made which exist beyond the *Zeitgeist.* These distinctions are of taste and scholarship. The standards of "magazine verse" in *The New Yorker* are sustained and exchanged by "little treasury" collections of verse which are clipped for the most part from current magazines: the impression gained from these is a lack of taste and learning; and reading through them, one moves from one group of "magazine verses" to the next. These collections have a commercial and philistine air. True signs of taste and scholarship are present in the Warren-Erskine *Six Centuries of Great Poetry* (Dell).

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The loving ended as all self-love ends
And teaches us that only fair-grounds have
The right to show us halls of mirrors where
In every place we look we see our stare
Taunting our own identities. But love
Perceives without a mirror in his hand.

I think Miss Jennings has written a directly inspired poem that deserves respect and admiration from her contemporaries; she has set herself distinctly apart from other poets, and may, if all goes well, make her own world, the enduring "something new" that critics always hope to find, the place beyond the *Zeitgeist.*

John Ashbery's book, *Some Trees,* like other recent volumes in the Yale Series of Younger Poets, is published with the blessings of W. H. Auden. Auden's introductions almost always steal the show; I never resist the temptation to read a new one. Auden has style and conversational wit which the age has paid tribute to—and which no one would deny. His quick mind lacks the trappings of respectability; it shifts and takes whatever it desires, and critical irresponsibility seizes him by the hair whenever his conversation drifts to the subject of American verse. He is certainly generous, but when he speaks of Mr. Ashbery's promise as one that places him in the tradition of Rimbaud, his generosity overburdens the young poet who receives it—where does Ashbery go from there? Ashbery's lines are in good prose; they are by no means dull, and the most amusing of them—in which a scene between a naked "novice" and an angel is described—were probably written to shock clubwomen in the suburbs. Ashbery should be naughtier than that—and then turn to Rimbaud, if he wishes, for his master.

In Wilfred Watson's *Friday's Child,* the American suburbs abruptly disappear. Of the younger poets he is the most happily free from (I almost wrote "classroom") conventions of the recent *Zeitgeist.* His distance from them may be geographical, for he lives in Canada, but this I doubt. His distance is better defined by the poems in his book. His chosen masters are Yeats and Dylan Thomas, and his debts to them are acknowledged by name within the poems. He has also read the Elizabethans:

O love, teach us to love you, that we may
Through burning Carthage take our way.

Since he has paid his debts to Thomas in two poems, the first "An Admiration" and the second "A Contempt"—the latter of greater passion

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and a deeper tribute to the best of Thomas than the first, his way seems cleared. His writing is quite unlike (to say the least) poets of the *New Yorker* school; how far unlike it is in the lines of his ballad "O My Poor Darling":

O my poor darling
Legs arms and round backside
Flanks and thighs hotly eyed
Pawed at and then devoured
Chawed, masticated in
The fiery lion's inside
A sad end for a bride
O my poor darling

It is an excellent ballad and mock epithalamium, not the best poem in the book, but a good introduction to Watson's promise. So far he has more concern with discovering language which conveys direct emotion—the sensuous image, however he may find it—than any poet of his generation. It is easy enough to find his flaws and to speak of his lack of ease, to say that Wilbur's lines are smoother, and are, which is true, more gracefully turned. His inspiration, still youthful, and charged with the spirit of Romantic verse, may burn itself out, but for the moment, it runs closer to what I know as poetry than the skills of writing "magazine verse."

Since *Friday's Child* is Watson's first book, it is best not to embalm it with praise, and then five years later, kick the book that follows it into the gutter. The great probability is that he will outgrow his debts to Thomas and Yeats and his direction is pointed in his "Lines: I Praise God's Mankind in an Old Woman."

"To hell with cookie-pushers who think poetry is a bun shop and are busy making éclairs." The quotation is from the jacket of Ezra Pound's new book of cantos: *Section: Rock-Drill 85-95 de los cantares.* In that instruction I hear the sound of Pound's voice, and I also read it as a warning, more perceptive than praise, to younger poets of the present season. The language of the warning has the ring, the associations of Pound's earlier days in London, but its meaning is timely and convincing. For the moment it applies to the writing of verse that is made for suburban readers and their children. Pound himself has always written poetry (however charming some of his early lyrics were and are) that should be placed at an opposite extreme from "magazine verse."

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Pound's *Cantos* have remained a problem to the majority of his critics. Because of the erratic nature of his genius—and he is one of the very few living poets to whom the word "genius" is appropriate—there will continue to be differences of opinion concerning the value of some cantos as opposed to others. In the *Cantos* Pound is a great historian of cultures. A final judgment of them—and the entire work itself—rests in the future. If nothing else, the *Cantos* have proved Pound master of a style, a style which permits him to talk out loud, to air his theories, to quote his preferences, to write lines of poetry, to translate quotations from Chinese, Latin, and Greek, or quote them directly as he chooses, to interpret history—all without losing the character of a form he has created. As poetry, or as coherent thinking, it is madness to say that everything he writes within the *Cantos* is of equal or lasting value—of course, there are many unequal passages in them; and at best they depend upon the authority of his poetic insight. But it is not critical nonsense to admire the style, the wit, the passages of lyrical intensity contained within the *Cantos*—and to recognize even now that Pound's *Cantos* should be accepted as one of the major works of our time. *Rock-Drill's* ten cantos are a rocklike pedestal for a group of later cantos, and no group of cantos is without several magnificent poems. This book has Canto 91, which, as far as I know, is the best poem published in 1956, and it is likely to endure for many years to come. For readers of the twentieth century, Pound has invented, has "made new" lyric poetry in "the grand manner", in the lines that begin:

that the body of light come forth
from the body of fire
And that your eyes come to the surface
from the deep wherein they were sunken,
Reina—for 300 years,
and now sunken
That your eyes come forth from their caves
& light then
as the holly-leaf
qui laborat, orat

These and the lines that follow have an imperishable quality that should instantly be discerned (if not completely understood) by any intelligent reader of poetry. They also contain more than a hint of the probity of Pound's historical imagination. I am content to let others worry about his syntax and his use of Chinese characters—which, often

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as not, he translates and explains within his text. He has not relinquished his own rules for "the serious artist." He has never been a writer for the lazy reader of verse. He may confuse a few of his admirers; but he will never bore his readers.

If Pound has never lost the affection of his friends in Italy, it is because he shares with them "a rage for order" as well as the drop of anarchy that stirs in Latin blood—and to them also, he represents the gentleman of the "old school," poet and man of letters of the first order, and in that line, the heir of Walter Savage Landor and of Robert Browning. They are not wrong. Pound may be trusted to conform to no convention of suburban origin.

Horace Gregory

UNREAL RADICALISM

IN SEARCH OF HERESY. By John W. Aldridge. McGraw-Hill. $4.00.

In almost any other period one would assume that a writer undertaking a social criticism of contemporary literature would show more than a passing interest in the structure of society, in contemporary history, and in the motives of political ideology. Now Mr. Aldridge is a critic who has made much of the writings of the "lost generation" in the aftermath of the First World War, and one might have expected him to concentrate in this new book on the historical conditions of American literary life in the past ten years. From the creative writers themselves we have had more than a hint of that maddening reluctance to face up to the real experience of the past decade, a reluctance which has made us more and more dependent on critics and social analysts for our sense of the world we live in. Actually Mr. Aldridge, who likes to speak for the younger generation, permits himself the same immunity as the creative writers, so that when he turns away from the literary values of the post-World War I novelists—the only values he seems capable of responding to—he too turns to critics and social analysts for his view of the world.

The bulk of *In Search of Heresy,* subtitled "American Literature in an Age of Conformity," is made up of five essays on contemporary literature and society, or rather, on literature and on certain writings about literature and society, mostly Lionel Trilling's and David Riesman's. The remainder of the book consists of five shorter pieces, of negligible interest, on Hemingway, Malcolm Cowley, Ira Wolfert, James

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T. Farrell, and the function of book-reviewing. It is altogether a symptomatic and depressing book, written in an abstract and brittle prose, without any theoretical originality or sustained literary insights.

Its most irritating quality derives above all from its fake posture of radicalism. Surely it was time for somebody to write a book about the Age of Conformity without a single mention of the Cold War, and Mr. Aldridge has done it. (He has also established himself as the most garrulous pontificator on the subject of "The Writer in the University" without once mentioning the breakdown of liberal education, of which the presence of writers on university faculties is, unhappily, a coefficient and for which it is often a cover-up.) Mr. Aldridge's social criticism of literature centers around one overriding concern: the novel of manners, and the fact that the past decade has failed to produce satisfactory examples of it. This failure is interesting; but it is interesting *for literature* only insofar as the critic is willing to explore the subtle relationships between our new social situation and the modifications it may be expected to effect in such traditional literary forms as the novel of manners. For the social mode of criticism depends on the observation of such modifications in literature (and this means in literary *form* as well as content) for its meaning. But such observation is not in itself a sufficient basis for analysis if it is accompanied—as it is in Mr. Aldridge's case—by a systematic refusal to admit the central historical experience of our period. This experience for the past decade has been the Cold War (one blushes at making so obvious a declaration), whose ideological and economic ramifications have affected every part of our lives. And this is where Mr. Aldridge's book becomes symptomatic: he would like to be radical without being political, and since he will not be political, his radicalism disintegrates into a cultural nostalgia, embroidered with passionate disavowals but in the end not really distinguishable from the conservatism now flourishing.

As a substitute for politics Mr. Aldridge, like so many people nowadays, fixes upon Mr. David Riesman. The little analysis of which his book can boast consists of setting Lionel Trilling's essays on the novel of manners over against *The Lonely Crowd,* and the result is predictable: "One effect . . . has been to deprive the novelist of the means of distinguishing among characters through differences in their appearance and manners, social position, and breeding. He has also been deprived of some of his oldest themes—the movement of the individual up and down the scale of class; his struggle for wealth and prestige," etc., etc. "The novelist in the predominantly 'other-directed' culture of today . . . is faced with a situation in which increasingly everyone tends to look,

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dress, and act like everyone else, to drive the same cars, to live in the same kind of houses, and, because of the power of the mass media, even to think the same thoughts." Where else can one find so many of the new liberal platitudes wrapped up in one package? Note the bland assumption that class distinctions no longer exist in American society. Note that the struggle for wealth and prestige has been relegated to the past. While this passage may be one more evidence of the debilitating effect of academic life on the literary mind—for this is patently a description of life on a college campus and not in the least descriptive of our social structure at large—it demonstrates the critic's inability to recognize new social formations as they emerge, a serious deficiency in a writer who makes the social novel his special concern. Moreover, in swallowing Riesman whole, Mr. Aldridge fails to see that Riesman's great proficiency in politicking his data against what he takes to be the prevailing current of this or that moment makes him the representative figure par excellence of the liberal interested above all in adjusting to the status quo. Riesman, if only because he is more sensitive to shifts on the surface of our culture, is more brilliant at the game of adjusting than most, and has worked out a style better suited to rapid realignments.

In the face of his retreat from politics and social experience, only the sheer force of a first-rate literary taste might have redeemed Mr. Aldridge's critical ruminations. But this too is lacking. There are passages, in fact, in which the author of *In Search of Heresy* gives the impression of having a vested interest in bad writing. How else explain his insistence that Truman Capote and Gore Vidal, for example, are to be taken seriously as literary artists? How else explain the following passage:

> In issue after issue of the quarterlies one read the same names at the heads of stories—Randall Jarrell, Mary McCarthy, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Eudora Welty, Saul Bellow, Elizabeth Hardwick, Flannery O'Connor, Jean Stafford, Shirley Jackson, Katherine Anne Porter, Robie Macauley—and when the quarterly reviewers devoted their characteristically scrupulous attention to fiction at all, it was almost certainly to be the work of these same writers. Those, on the other hand, who like Norman Mailer, Calder Willingham, James Jones, John Horne Burns, Irwin Shaw, Alfred Hayes, Gore Vidal, and Chandler Brossard, had come up outside the universities . . . were just as scrupulously ignored.

He seems not to have the slightest idea why the first group of writers might interest editors of literary periodicals far more than the second. Or how shall one explain the fact that Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is not even mentioned in this book, nor Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*,

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nor the writings of James Baldwin? Of course Baldwin and Ellison might be embarrassing to Mr. Aldridge in another way; just about every word he writes about the literary possibilities of the old South (great) as contrasted with those of the nasty urban North (nil), is refuted in their work. And since he has neither politics nor literary taste to support his position, Mr. Aldridge inevitably falls back on the most tiresome cliché in modern criticism: the South "happens to be the only section of the country left where . . . there is still a living tradition and a usable myth," etc., etc. (He doesn't tell us that a poet must be a Catholic in order to write lyric poetry, but he isn't interested in poetry anyway.) And then there is that wonderful sentence in which he says of *The Adventures of Augie March,* "It is interesting to see . . . that the novel in its early sections partakes of some of the dramatic advantages arising out of the racial and economic tensions of lower-class urban experience, a type of experience which in the twenties and thirties was much more common to our larger cities than it is now." I don't know where Mr. Aldridge has been living lately, but in one of "our larger cities" where I happen to live the "dramatic advantages arising out of the racial and economic tensions of lower-class urban experience" keep the newspapers quite busy, and are in fact accelerating at such speed that his ideal novelist should be watering at the mouth over them. But this could only happen to that novelist if he were living in the real world, instead of being consumed, as Mr. Aldridge is, by distaste for the present increase in social mobility and the consequent loss we have suffered (loss for literature, that is) as a result.

Insofar as Mr. Aldridge's book can be taken seriously as a criticism of the Age of Conformity, it actually helps the Age along, in that it confirms what is so often alleged, that the protest against conformity stems from a nostalgia for the '20s and '30s, and a failure to grasp the new historical reality. This book also contributes to that adaptation of radical rhetoric to conservative uses which is one of the more depressing aspects of the present period. (It is interesting, by the way, that while Mr. Aldridge ransacks back issues of *PR* for his points of departure, he ignores Irving Howe's "This Age of Conformity," which did after all achieve a certain notoriety.) The charge that the criticism of conformity stems from nothing but nostalgia is, I think, false. But to refute it we shall need the real thing—a radical critic—not the collection of shibboleths worked over in this volume.

Hilton Kramer

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THE PERILOUS MAGIC OF NYMPHETS

LOLITA. By Vladimir Nabokov. The Olympia Press, Paris. fr. 1800 ($5.00).

In the bizarre mixture of vintage 1830 sham editorial note and parody *Saturday Review* piece that serves as an introduction to this remarkable book, we are earnestly informed that "As a case history, 'Lolita' will become no doubt a classic in psychiatric circles." There is no doubt that it will not. The shades of Stavrogin, Lewis Carroll, Tiberius, Popeye, or worse hinted at in the foreword, the pornographic promises implicit in its publication by a Parisian erotica house, seem only ghosts to be dispelled almost in the very first chapter. Even to state that the book is *about* a cultivated European emigré in love with a twelve-year-old girl is misleading: modern readers cannot help but refer such a theme to the wrong novelistic conventions. There is no clinical, sociological, or mythic seriousness about *Lolita,* but it flames with a tremendous perversity of an unexpected kind. Readers of Mr. Nabokov's earlier work will be more prepared than most to relate such a theme to a style weird enough to support it in a new way. They may understand what it means to say that this book often suggests a terrifyingly semi-serious parody of *Manon Lescaut* by James Thurber. Nearly everything about *Lolita* is parodic, save for the primary love story, which ridicules only itself.

The story is told by one Humbert Humbert, presumably writing from a psychopathic ward, and, later, from jail. He comes, he informs us, from a mélange of European stock, and was raised on the Riviera, where his father ran a hotel. There, at the age of twelve, "in a princedom by the sea," he met his first and archetypal love, Annabel Leigh. Their brief affair having terminated in her untimely death, Humbert crystallizes around her image an ideal type of girl, between the ages of nine and fourteen, whose sexual power is to forever hold him prisoner. "Nymphets," he calls such creatures:

> Between those age limits are all girl children nymphets? Of course, not. Otherwise, we who are in the know, we lone voyagers, we nympholepts, would have long gone insane. Neither are good looks any criterion; and vulgarity, or at least what a given community terms so, does not necessarily impair certain mysterious characteristics, the fey grace, the elusive, shifty, soul-shattering, insidious charm that separates the nymphet from such coevals of hers as are incomparably more dependent on the spatial world of synchronous phenomena than on that intangible island of entranced time where Lolita plays with her likes.

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"Lolita" is an American nymphet, one Dolores Haze, whose affair with Humbert occupies the bulk of the book. After some rather telescoped description of a scholarly career, Humbert tells of his unfortunate early marriage with the chronologically mature but otherwise infantile Valeria. She resolves his misery by running off with a Tsarist taxi-driver in Paris, ending up, before her death, in typically Nabokovian fashion ("the couple had somehow got over to California and had been used there, for an excellent salary, in a year-long experiment conducted by a distinguished American ethnologist. The experiment dealt with human and racial reactions to a diet of bananas and dates in a constant position on all fours"). Finally landing him in America, chance leads Humbert to a small New England town and the role of roomer in the house of the widowed Charlotte Haze, whose bobby-sox daughter, Lolita, strikes up in him irresistible reverberations of the lost Annabel. Humbert marries Mrs. Haze solely in order to murder her and gain legal guardianship of the child. It is through no action of his own that he finds himself a widower again, driving to Lolita's summer camp to remove his daughter, take her home, and possess her.

On their first night together, Lolita turns out to be completely corrupt. From then on, their affair consists of a frenzied car-and-motel tour of the whole country, finally culminating in the loss of Lolita to Clare Quilty, a playwright, and the murder of that hated rival in one of the funniest and most grotesque scenes in the book.

Throughout all this, Mr. Nabokov's attention is fixed on the sentimental treatment of the love affair itself, and the satiric portrayal of the American *kitsch* through which the lovers peregrinate. It is Humbert's own amazingly flexible rhetoric, primarily, which permits of rapid switches back and forth from: "and feeling as I did her warm weight on my lap (so that, in a sense, I was always with Lolita as a mother is with child)" to: "We had breakfast in the township of Soda, pop. 1001." Much of the book's comic genius lies in the style, which alternates elements of Turgenev and mock Proust, rigorous Constant-like *analyse de l'amour* and parody and pastiche. There are moments of surrealoid super-clarity, but unlike true surrealism, these glimpses never stake all on the effect of the moment, abandoning any further dramatic utility. They seem to spring from the kind of Dickensian eye which lets Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* notice, before any more concrete signs of familial disorder, the fact that one of Mrs. Jellyby's curtains is secured with a fork. But the most pervasive single device of style is the verbal diddle. Humbert fiddles with his own name ("Hamburg," "Humbug,"

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"Homburg," etc.) and indeed, with everything else. "Guilty of killing Quilty," he mutters toward the beginning of the narrative, "Oh my Lolita, I have only words to play with." Usually the games are even more Joycean, especially in a long section in which are described the recondite *noms de guerre* with which his pursuing rival, the more to pique him, fills out motel registers. One thinks of Thurber's mad fixation on the linguistic games with which he avoids social confrontations. But in *Lolita,* the word-play leads back to the love-play always; it is a little like an extended trope on the pathetic fallacy, in which verbal hocus-pocus makes the obsessive object light up, in intellectual neon, everywhere.

The problem of what to make of *Lolita* has led certain of the book's admirers to beg off its sexual and literary outlandishness by remarking that the whole thing is *really* Mr. Nabokov's love affair with America. Certainly Dolores herself, with her outrageous jargon and tastes, is part of what Auden has called the "heterogeneous dreck" of the American landscape through which she and her doting lover move. But there is something more here, surely, some better way for the reader to escape (if he must) the too-serious acceptance of the suburb of heterosexuality

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in which Humbert dwells. His particular Lecherville has, as far as I know, no well-known clinically respectable name of long standing (Old Can't-tell-the-players-without-a-scorecard Krafft-Ebing has to resort to "violation of persons under the age of fourteen" for his map). This is important, I feel. Humbert himself tells us: "I am not concerned with so-called 'sex' at all. Anyone can imagine these elements of animality. A greater endeavor lures me on: to fix once and for all the perilous magic of nymphets." Indeed, the "sex" in this book is all subject to tender exegesis (after one rare moment of melodramatic tenderness from Lolita: "It may interest physiologists to learn, at this point, that I have the ability—a most singular case, I presume—of shedding torrents of tears throughout the other tempest"). The not-quite-teen-age girl herself, of course, providing her learned lover with duties involving the procurement of sundaes and movie magazines, is the only plausible modern *femme fatale*. She is elusive, perverse, and, above all, *transient* (each nymphet has but a few years of affinitive power). Indeed, there *is* a term for the moral condition that is the subject of this book, but it comes from the lexicon of purely literary pathology. "Nympholepsy," the frenzy of attachment to an unattainable object, was a common word for a commonly cultivated romantic state. I rather think that Mr. Nabokov's strategy was to literalize the word's metaphor, and to write of a class of real nymphets who could produce in their palely loitering admirers the rhetorical action whose fruit is romantic writing. Swinburne and Poe provide the names for the two lost loves, and the lost child and the Lady of Pain unite, for Mr. Nabokov himself, in one "fair, nasty nymph." *Lolita*, if it is anything *"really,"* is the record of Mr. Nabokov's love affair with the romantic novel, a today-unattainable literary object as short-lived of beauty as it is long of memory. It is also, not to change the subject for a minute, just about the funniest book I remember having read.

John Hollander

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ADAM AND THE ELDERS

THE AMERICAN ADAM, by R. W. B. Lewis. University of Chicago Press. $5.50.

Writers like R. W. B. Lewis suffer too much from the kind of taboo that would prevent me (if I heeded it) from comparing his work, as I mean briefly to do, with that new bombshell of a secular moralist, Kingsley Amis. In his poise, his craft, and his genial wit, Amis is almost another Congreve, a Congreve of Wormwood Scrubs. Without in fact attacking much more than an outrageous gang of stuffed shirts, he immediately earns the reputation of a dangerous radical. His first two novels are immensely invigorating, but offer us little more in the way of cultural wisdom than the observation that in certain circumstances even Mozart can be a bore. Mr. Lewis would sooner die than say nasty things about Mozart. Like Lucky Jim's friend Margaret Peel, he is prone to making embarrassing avowals of good will. Growing up in the aura of a group of powerful literary moralists he is given, in his thirties, to posing and answering questions already handsomely posed and answered by men now circling their sixties. The result is what one would expect, a certain amount of pseudo-Trilling, pseudo-Blackmur, and pseudo-Ransom. This, unfortunately, is anything but ingratiating and it is best to mention it and get it out of the way as soon as possible. Most of it is concentrated in a thoroughly dismal epilogue in which he dances briefly but deftly between a set of dubious alternatives.

I invite a reader of Amis to consider what Lucky Jim might say to the following:

> The contemporary picture is not a dishonest one. It contains many remarkable and even irreversible psychological, sociological and political insights. It seems to be the picture most clearly warranted by public and private experience in our time.

One might, if this were all, go out and buy a nice, comfy reversible insight and forget the whole business. But if only that the sins of the sons should not be visited on the fathers, we ought not to take this too seriously. Some of Mr. Lewis's book is no more than a Palladian propitiation of such fashionable idols of the tribe as Experience, Irony, Flexibility, and Ambiguity. As a young Joseph feeding his brethren from the pharaoh's teeming granary, he has forgotten that the real Joseph left his coat of many colors behind. He wants us to know that his ascent to the viceregalship has not been easy and that his heart is still torn between the desert and the palace, between the Adamic joys of the

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Party of Hope and the sober insights of the Party of Memory. Lucky Jim, one feels, would not even have had a word for this.

Nevertheless, Mr. Lewis's lapses seem to me superficial enough to deserve a closer study. The main trouble is his failure to make anything at all of politics as a factor in the intellectual history of a nation and a century, a mistake that not the most sanguine of the dear old Party of Hope ever made. Emerson wrote a passionate essay on Napoleon. Whitman fed on Lincoln and Lincoln (intellectually) on Daniel Webster. Mr. Lewis comes out stoutly (if predictably) for the Party of Irony and very sensibly analyzes the theological and philosophical atmosphere within which the mighty confrontations of *The Scarlet Letter, The Marble Faun, Moby Dick,* and *Billy Budd* came into being. But the somewhat marmoreal quality of his feeling for these masterworks derives, I should say, from a familiar sort of misapplied honesty; a determination to treat fiction in language the authors themselves might have used. The nineteenth-century writers still discussed fiction in terms of a moralized theology. Mr. Lewis makes the mistake of assuming that politics can safely be stuffed under the rubrics of morals and theology.

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Horace Reynolds
The Christian Science Monitor

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The literalness that makes him a good critic of the latter set of ideas seriously hampers him in the treatment of literature, which registers so much beside. The ideal of "communion," of general cohesiveness, consequently becomes a bit sticky and intimidating in Mr. Lewis's hands.

Mr. Lewis *is* an acute and reasonably original writer on the conjunctions of literature and philosophical religion. In one place at least he clears the air as effectively as any Amis.

> But in the nineteenth century the movement ran sharply in the other direction: toward a reduction of theology to one of the arts, or toward a diffusion of it among them all. Theology in that age was a singularly Protean affair; it existed and exercised its influence everywhere and nowhere; intellectual history scarcely knows where to have it. For if, by theology, we mean the notions held—and rendered more or less articulate and orderly—about the relation of God and man; and if, by religion, we mean a radiance of conscience inciting actions with respect to that ultimate relation: then we are faced with a paradox. A century ago, matters (of literary endeavor, of historical perspective, or morals) brought forward with nothing like doctrinal theological definition were nonetheless propelled with something very like religious force.

This is well and courageously said. Mr. Lewis and I went to school when the serious study of theology had become respectable again. He is excellent on the elder James, whose lack of system, whose principled defiance of orthodox Swedenborgianism, he rightly makes much of, and whose philosophy he amusingly describes as "a sort of cosmic growl." He observes that the "existential" (or perhaps merely hectic) nature of the nineteenth-century flowering made a logical development of ideas unthinkable. The most anyone could contribute in that atmosphere was a cluster of two or three ideas: the usual quota, for all practical purposes, was one. We let the associations of words carry us away when we imagine James another Swedenborg or Brownson another Augustine. In purely *intellectual* terms, the dialogue between Fallen and Adamic man was as stark as the social world that begot it; its interest lies in its literary energy. Far from being sardonic bystanders, the great writers were up to their eyes in theological hot water—but only up to their eyes. We enjoy them more now because of the superior momentum of art itself.

Mr. Lewis is also interesting on Parker, Bushnell, Parkman, Charles Brockden Brown, and a certain Robert Montgomery Bird. His relative ease with the minor writers shows a greater promise of growth than one would suspect from sampling only the high points of his argument.

R. W. Flint

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ISAAC ROSENFELD

Isaac Rosenfeld, long a contributor to this magazine and one of America's finest writers, died in July in Chicago at the age of thirty-eight. About twenty-five years ago in Chicago Isaac and I became close friends, and now the editors who were the first to recognize his great talents have asked me to write a few last words about him.

What shall those last words be? There is something in Isaac that repels last words. The traits that make a man most real and draw the love of others to him are also his most mysterious traits. The better we know them the less we can say about them. This reality, so concrete it almost challenges death, is too mysterious to be named. Shall I tell how he hummed, how he smoked a cigarette, how he laughed at the end of a story, how he spoke when he was in deepest earnest? I can't. He was no ordinary man. He swayed his friends with an unknown power. We called it "charm," "wisdom," "genius." In the end, with a variety of intonations, we could find nothing to call it but "Isaac."

So—no last words. The only way to him that lies open to me now is that of recollection.

It is late afternoon, a spring day, and the Tuley Debating Club is meeting on the second floor of the old building, since destroyed by fire. The black street doors are open, the skate wheels are buzzing on the hollow concrete and the handballs strike the walls with a taut puncturing sound. Upstairs, I hold the gavel. Isaac rises and asks for the floor. He has a round face, somewhat pale, glasses, and his light hair is combed back with earnestness and maturity. He is wearing short pants. His subject is *The World as Will and Idea,* and he speaks with perfect authority. He is very serious. He has read Schopenhauer.

Another day, a few years later: he is living on the South Side, attending the University of Chicago. Oscar Tarcov and I come to visit him. His father's house is always neat, but Isaac's room is a wilderness. He is there with shades drawn and lights burning all day; on his small tottering desk is a huge torn Webster's Dictionary, and on the dictionary a large office typewriter. There is a small bust of Beethoven and a blue

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painting of a naked giant into whose face there comes a beam of light from the cosmos and a Persian print showing a man in his grave. Above him a mourner stands. We are on a surrealist kick and have put on a play by Oscar called "Twin Bananas" in the lobby of Harper Library, all three of us representing headless men. Today we get drunk and crawl under the living-room carpet to sleep.

We are in Madison, Wisconsin. It is Indian summer, beautiful and somnolent. We have hired a canoe. I am getting in alone and find myself suddenly standing fully dressed in the water. A student runs down the pier and yells, "Hey, have you got a watch?"

"Yes, I have a watch."

"Give it here to me. You'll ruin it."

I give him my watch. And now Isaac comes rambling by, abstracted, and I get his attention. I am sinking in the mud. He pulls me out and we go home to St. James Place. I change my clothes in the sun-filled room. We have a long conversation about *The Brothers Karamazov.* We are hoping for positive results on the tuberculin test and plan to go to a sanitorium in the Far West.

It is New York. Isaac and Vasiliki are living in the West Seventies, and I come to stay. This is *it*! Marvelous spirit and excitement. Isaac has given up his graduate studies in logic to write; Vasiliki has a job. Nothing happens that is not colored by the highest emotions. Even the squalor of the place is an emotional squalor. After Vasiliki goes to work in the morning Isaac and I sit at the breakfast table until noon, and we have a flaming quarrel over the cockroaches. Isaac has become mystical about our right to take life and he will not lift a hand against the cockroaches who are running away with the place. He forces me to take the tougher position. I don't find it in my heart to be too severe with the cockroaches, either. We harness up Smoky the short-legged dog and walk out on Broadway and marvel at the Times and drink pina colada.

His very absurdities spoke with a strange force of things far from absurd. Absurdity was the disguise his intelligence sometimes wore. He was dogmatic, but he wore his dogmas out. They gave him temporarily a firmness he greatly needed in the great and dangerous enterprise to which he devoted and perhaps finally sacrificed his life. In some of his strange beliefs I often followed him because I loved him and did not want to lose my connection with him. He consistently antagonized

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"intelligent opinion." I saw in this an obscure and hidden wisdom. This same opinion was death to many of its exponents.

He did not follow the fat gods. Of politics—I use the term in its minor sense—he had no understanding. Others got into corporations and universities, into publishing and government. Not he. Neither success nor failure interested him. I think he liked the miserable failures in the Village better than the miserable successes Uptown, but I believe he understood that the failures had not failed enough but were fairly well satisfied with the mild form of social revolt which their incomplete ruin represented.

He did not trust his own intelligence too far. A strong sense of honor prevented him from accepting its early and easy victories. The victories he wanted were those of the heart. Ecstasy was what he pursued, and he paid the cost in suffering, a horrible and bloody cost. But I don't think he had much choice. The evils that wear out our power to focus clearly and strain our faces until we no longer see any good, any justice, had attacked him too. He endured boredom and deadness, despair, even madness. This is the truth about the reign of the fat gods. It is not merely dull and harmless. It destroys and consumes everything, it covers the human image with deadly films, it undermines all quality with its secret rage, it subverts everything good and exalts lies, and on its rotten head it wears a crown of normalcy. Most do not fight but make their peace with it. Isaac fought.

He won. He changed himself. He enlarged his power to love. Many loved him. He was an extraordinary and significant man.

He died in a seedy furnished room on Walton Street, alone—a bitter death to his children, his wife, his lovers, his father.

Meanwhile we live, we have our reflexes, habits and duties, we button shirts and brush teeth and answer letters—write and read last words about our dead friends. The lungs, the viscera, the eyes, seek what they need in air, food and light. Love too we seek, though some of it lies in dead hands and can neither be given nor taken. This is one of our peculiarities. Like the Persian in Isaac's picture we stand fixed where it lies buried.

Saul Bellow

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VARIETY

FAULKNER AND DESEGREGATION

Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety. And at such a moment, unable to see and not daring to imagine what the future will now bring forth, one clings to what one knew, or thought one knew; to what one possessed or dreamed that one possessed. Yet, it is only when a man is able, without bitterness or self-pity, to surrender a dream he has long cherished or a privilege he has long possessed that he is set free —he has set himself free—for higher dreams, for greater privileges. All men have gone through this, go through it, each according to his degree, throughout their lives. It is one of the irreducible facts of life. And remembering this, especially since I am a Negro, affords me almost my only means of understanding what is happening in the minds and hearts of white Southerners today.

For the arguments with which the bulk of relatively articulate white Southerners of good-will have met the necessity of desegregation have no value whatever as arguments, being almost entirely and helplessly dishonest, when not, indeed, insane. After more than two hundred years in slavery and ninety years of quasi-freedom, it is hard to think very highly of William Faulkner's advice to "go slow." "They don't mean go slow," Thurgood Marshall is reported to have said, "they mean don't go." Nor is the squire of Oxford very persuasive when he suggests that white Southerners, left to their own devices, will realize that their own social structure looks silly to the rest of the world and correct it of their own accord. It has looked silly, to use Faulkner's rather strange adjective, for a long time; so far from trying to correct it, Southerners, who seem to be characterized by a species of defiance most perverse when it is most despairing, have clung to it, at incalculable cost to themselves, as the only conceivable and as an absolutely sacrosanct way of life. They have never seriously conceded that their social structure was mad. They have insisted, on the contrary, that everyone who criticized it was mad.

Faulkner goes further. He concedes the madness and moral wrongness of the South but at the same time he raises it to the level of a mystique which makes it somehow unjust to discuss Southern society in the same terms in which one would discuss any other society. "Our position is wrong and untenable," says Faulkner, "but it is not wise to keep an emotional

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people off balance." This, if it means anything, can only mean that this "emotional people" have been swept "off balance" by the pressure of recent events, that is, the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation. When the pressure is taken off—and not an instant before—this "emotional people" will presumably find themselves once again on balance and will then be able to free themselves of an "obsolescence in [their] own land" in their own way and, of course, in their own time. The question left begging is what, in their history to date, affords any evidence that they have any desire, or capacity to do this. And it is, I suppose, impertinent to ask just what Negroes are supposed to do while the South works out what, in Faulkner's rhetoric, becomes something very closely resembling a high and noble tragedy.

The sad truth is that whatever modifications have been effected in the social structure of the South since the Reconstruction, and any alleviations of the Negro's lot within it, are due to great and incessant pressure, very little of it indeed from within the South. That the North has been guilty of Pharisaism in its dealing with the South does not negate the fact that much of this pressure has come from the North. That some—not nearly as many as Faulkner would like to believe—Southern Negroes prefer, or are afraid of changing the status quo does not negate the

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fact that it is the Southern Negro himself who, year upon year, and generation upon generation, has kept the Southern waters troubled. As far as the Negro's life in the South is concerned, the NAACP is the only organization which has struggled, with admirable single-mindedness and skill, to raise him to the level of a citizen. For this reason alone, and quite apart from the individual heroism of many of its Southern members, it cannot be equated, as Faulkner equates it, with the pathological Citizen's Council. One organization is working within the law and the other is working against, and outside it. Faulkner's threat to leave the "middle of the road" where he has, presumably, all these years, been working for the benefit of Negroes, reduces itself to a more or less up-to-date version of the Southern threat to secede from the Union.

Faulkner—among so many others!—is so plaintive concerning this "middle of the road" from which "extremist" elements of both races are driving him that it does not seem unfair to ask just what he has been doing there until now. Where is the evidence of the struggle he has been carrying on there on behalf of the Negro? Why, if he and his enlightened confreres in the South have been boring from within to destroy segregation, do they react with such panic when the walls show any signs of falling? Why—and how—does one move from the middle of the road where one was aiding Negroes into the streets—to shoot them?

Now it is easy enough to state flatly that Faulkner's middle of the road does not—cannot—exist and that he is guilty of great emotional and intellectual dishonesty in pretending that it does. I think this is why he clings to his fantasy. It is easy enough to accuse him of hypocrisy when he speaks of man being "indestructible because of his simple will to freedom." But he is not being hypocritical; he means it. It is only that Man is one thing —a rather unlucky abstraction in this case—and the Negroes he has always known, so fatally tied up in his mind with his grandfather's slaves, are quite another. He is at his best, and is perfectly sincere when he declares, in *Harpers,* "To live anywhere in the world today and be against equality because of race or color is like living in Alaska and being against snow. We have already got snow. And as with the Alaskan, merely to live in armistice with it is not enough. Like the Alaskan, we had better use it." And though this seems to be flatly opposed to his statement (in an interview printed in *The Reporter*) that, if it came to a contest between the Federal government and Mississippi, he would fight for Mississippi, "even if it meant going out into the streets and shooting Negroes," he means that, too. Faulkner means everything he says, means them all at once, and with very nearly the

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same intensity. This is why his statements demand our attention. He has perhaps never before more concretely expressed what it means to be a Southerner.

What seems to define the Southerner, in his own mind at any rate, is his relationship to the North, that is to the rest of the Republic, a relationship which can at the very best be described as uneasy. It is apparently very difficult to be at once a Southerner and an American; so difficult that many of the South's most independent minds are forced into the American exile; which is not, of course, without its aggravating, circular effect on the interior and public life of the South. A Bostonian, say, who leaves Boston is not regarded by the citizenry he has abandoned with the same venomous distrust as is the Southerner who leaves the South. The citizenry of Boston do not consider that they have been abandoned, much less betrayed. It is only the American Southerner who seems to be fighting, in his own entrails, a peculiar, ghastly, and perpetual war with all the rest of the country. ("Didn't you say," demanded a Southern woman of Robert Penn Warren, "that you was born down here, used to live right near here?" And when he agreed that this was so: "Yes . . . but you never said where you living now!")

The difficulty, perhaps, is that the Southerner clings to two entirely antithetical doctrines, two

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legends, two histories. Like all other Americans, he must subscribe, and is to some extent controlled by the beliefs and the principles expressed in the Constitution; at the same time, these beliefs and principles seem determined to destroy the South. He is, on the one hand, the proud citizen of a free society and, on the other, is committed to a society which has not yet dared to free itself of the necessity of naked and brutal oppression. He is part of a country which boasts that it has never lost a war; but he is also the representative of a conquered nation. I have not seen a single statement of Faulkner's concerning desegregation which does not inform us that his family has lived in the same part of Mississippi for generations, that his great-grandfather owned slaves, and that his ancestors fought and died in the Civil War. And so compelling is the image of ruin, gallantry and death thus evoked that it demands a positive effort of the imagination to remember that slaveholding Southerners were not the only people who perished in that war. Negroes and Northerners were also blown to bits. American history, as opposed to Southern history, proves that Southerners were not the only slaveholders, Negroes were not even the only slaves. And the segregation which Faulkner sanctifies by references to Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Gettysburg does not extend back that far, is, in fact, scarcely as old as the century. The "racial condition" which Faulkner will not have changed by "mere force of law or economic threat" was imposed by precisely these means. The Southern tradition, which is, after all, all that Faulkner is talking about, is not a tradition at all: when Faulkner evokes it, he is simply evoking a legend which contains an accusation. And that accusation, stated far more simply than it should be, is that the North, in winning the war, left the South only one means of asserting its identity and that means was the Negro.

"My people owned slaves," says Faulkner, "and the very obligation we have to take care of these people is morally bad." "This problem is . . . far beyond the moral one it is and still was a hundred years ago, in 1860, when many Southerners, including Robert Lee, recognized it as a moral one at the very instant they in turn elected to champion the underdog because that underdog was blood and kin and home." But the North escaped scot-free. For one thing, in freeing the slave, it established a moral superiority over the South which the South has not learned to live with until today; and this despite—or possibly because of—the fact that this moral superiority was bought, after all, rather cheaply. The North was no better prepared than the South, as it turned out, to make citizens of former slaves, but it was able, as the South was not, to

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wash its hands of the matter. Men who knew that slavery was wrong were forced, nevertheless, to fight to perpetuate it because they were unable to turn against "blood and kin and home." And when blood and kin and home were defeated, they found themselves, more than ever, committed: committed, in effect, to a way of life which was as unjust and crippling as it was inescapable. In sum, the North, by freeing the slaves of their masters, robbed the masters of any possibility of freeing themselves of the slaves.

When Faulkner speaks, then, of the "middle of the road," he is simply speaking of the hope—which was always unrealistic and is now all but smashed—that the white Southerner, with no coercion from the rest of the nation, will lift himself above his ancient, crippling bitterness and refuse to add to his already intolerable burden of blood-guiltiness. But this hope would seem to be absolutely dependent on a social and psychological stasis which simply does not exist. "Things have been getting better," Faulkner tells us, "for a long time. Only six Negroes were killed by whites in Mississippi last year, according to police figures." Faulkner surely knows how little consolation this offers a Negro and he also knows something about "police figures" in the Deep South. And he knows, too, that murder is not the worst thing that can happen to a man, black or white. But murder may be the worst thing a man can do. Faulkner is not trying to save Negroes, who are, in his view, already saved; who, having refused to be destroyed by terror, are far stronger than the terrified white populace; and who have, moreover, fatally, from his point of view, the weight of the Federal government behind them. He is trying to save "whatever good remains in those white people." The time he pleads for is the time in which the Southerner will come to terms with himself, will cease fleeing from his conscience, and achieve, in the words of Robert Penn Warren, "moral identity." And he surely believes, with Warren, that "Then in a country where moral identity is hard to come by, the South, because it has had to deal concretely with a moral problem, may offer some leadership. And we need any we can get. If we are to break out of the national rhythm, the rhythm between complacency and panic."

But the time Faulkner asks for does not exist—and he is not the only Southerner who knows it. There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment, the time is always now.

James Baldwin

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